Fools and heroes
The changing representation of the novelist-character

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FOOLS AND HEROES:

THE CHANGING REPRESENTATION OF THE NOVELIST-CHARACTER

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the representation of the novelist as a fictional character in British and Irish literary fiction from the late 1920s, when the character first began to appear concurrently in the work of numerous authors, until the end of the twentieth-century. In the twenty-first-century the character has retained its prominence, which is why selected supplementary novels written post-2000 have been included in the early chapters (although not the case studies) in order to demonstrate ongoing critical issues and suggest opportunities for further study. The most recently written novel to appear centrally – that is as a case study – is William Boyd's *Any Human Heart* – which was actually published in 2002. However, as Logan Mountstuart was originally conceived as part of Boyd's 1998 *Nat Tate: An American Artist, 1928-1960*, I believe that Logan's inclusion is justified within the twentieth-century time frame. Although the specific novelist-character (as opposed to the more general artist-character) does feature within the nineteenth-century British novel, notably in Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) and George Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891), the character only begins to appear with increased regularity at the end of the 1920s with Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928) and W. Somerset Maugham's *Cakes and Ale* (1930). The aim of this thesis is to interrogate the variety of metafictional purposes and metaphorical which the novelist-character can serve within the narrative, and to explore a range of critical issues that the presence of this character raises. This thesis also argues that the specific novelist-character is subject to a more cynical portrayal than the idealised artist-character/hero found in eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels, and examines causes behind this contrasting treatment.

In order to qualify as a novelist-character, the character in question must identify or define themself explicitly as a novelist rather than as any other kind of writer or artist. They must also demonstrate evidence of (or a preoccupation with) undertaking the process of writing a novel, and awareness of their position as a novelist. Many of the novelist-characters looked at are also the first person narrators of their novels; however it does not necessarily follow that all first person narrators are also novelist-characters. Although first person narrators may be seen to be telling a story, the novelist-narrators selected for this thesis explicitly identify as novelists, and repeated references are made throughout the novel to their own writing. In several instances they also appear to author some or all of the narrative in which they feature. Post-WWI, instances of generally artistic protagonists diminish, whilst the novelist-character

begins to proliferate and continues to do so throughout the twentieth-century and into the twenty-first. This thesis will look at a range of historical, critical, and cultural reasons to suggest why this shift – from artist to novelist-character – occurs and why the novelist-character comes to be represented in such a distinct way. Depictions of the novelist-character are seen to be influenced by various, often contradictory, theoretical and historical thinking on the figure of the novelist, in comparison with the figures of the artist, the author, and the writer. These are explored in Chapters One and Two.

Preliminary study indicated that there was no true progressive chronological deterioration of the novelist-character. Although appearances of the character in the 1980s-90s are seen as increasingly ambiguous, the character's representation does not necessarily become more negative towards the end of the century. Instead it becomes apparent that the character was, from the outset, typically depicted with derision – in fact the earliest novel looked at, Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, contains one of the most negative portraits. Whilst this does not preclude the impact of certain historical factors upon the portrayal of the novelist-character it dictated a thematic rather than chronological organisation of the case studies, which make up Chapters Three, Four, and Five. The scope of this study, along with the lack of preceding work on the analysis of the novelist-character, has necessitated the wide range of novels explored within this thesis. Each of the case study chapters focuses on a particular purpose which the novelist-character is seen to serve within the novel and examines it along with similar or comparative utilisations of the character. The three different aspects of the novelist-character's function explored in Chapters Three-Five are (i) autobiographical – in which the writer utilises their own biographical material in the depiction of the novelist-character; (ii) framing device – in which the novelist-character is employed as part of a metafictional frame narrative; (iii) metaphorical – in which the novelist-character is seen to perform a role which acts as a metaphor for the function of the novelist.

CONTENTS

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CHAPTER I: FOOLS AND HEROES
I. INTRODUCTION

> Put a novelist into the novel. He justifies aesthetic generalizations, which may be interesting – at least to me. He also justifies experiment. Specimens of his work may illustrate other possible or impossible ways of telling a story. And if you have him telling parts of the same story as you are, you can make a variation on the theme.[1]

This thesis came about through an interest in novels of an explicitly metafictional nature, coupled with the recognition that presenting the novelist as a protagonist or character enabled the author to utilise the character as a metafictional device. Through further reading it became apparent that the novelist-character could be seen as performing a variety of differing roles within the novel; the appearance of this character type in numerous guises across a broad sample of twentieth-century British and Irish fiction conveyed both its versatility and diversity. Yet there has been no one study that takes into account this pervasive character, at least not in terms of twentieth-century British fiction. The only comparable study concerning British novelists is the 1985 work by Guido Kums, focusing on what the author has termed 'built-in' novelists. Kums selects three metafictional novels – Angus Wilson's *No Laughing Matter* (1967), Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (1957-60) and Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) – as a 'short cut' through which to question the 'function, the possibilities and the status of the novel…that is why we chose novels about the writing of novels, and, more precisely, novels in which we find (at least) one important character who is a novelist,

[1] Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (London: Vintage, 2000), p.385.

and who, within the novel, himself undertakes the writing of a novel.'[2] These metafictional, self-reflexive novels interrogate the processes of artistic creation and the novelist's relationship to their work. They often tell the story of how and why the novel came to be written[3] – the life behind and of the work – supporting Boris Pasternak's statement that 'the clearest, most memorable and important feature of art is how it arises, and the world's best works, in telling of the most diverse things, are in fact narratives of their own birth.'[4]

As a 'celebration of the power of creative imagination,'[5] metafiction parallels certain aspects of the Künstlerroman, in that it represents the development of the protagonist's artistic abilities and sensibilities. If the artist in question is a novelist, then the narrative often takes the character 'to a point at which he is able to take up his pen and compose the novel we have just finished reading'[6] – Steven Kellman terms such novels 'self-begetting.' In *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (2006), Gregory Castle traces the etymology of the word Bildung, relating it to the similar sounding English word 'build,' and also finding that it, 'in one definition, refers to a complex construction or entity; it derives from *Bild* "picture" or "image."'[7] This expounds the theme of building or creating the self, which is central to the Bildungs/Künstlerroman. In the Bildungsroman this self-creation is vital to the protagonist's success in achieving the desired place within society; in the Künstlerroman the emphasis remains on the individual and his/her artistic merit. Novels of this type have been termed by M. H. Abrams:

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[2] Guido Kums, *Fiction, or the Language of our Discontent: a Study of the Built-in Novelist in the Novels of Angus Wilson, Lawrence Durrell and Doris Lessing* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin and New York: Peter Lang, 1985), pp.10-11.
[3] See Steven G. Kellman, *The Self-Begetting Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
[4] Boris Pasternak, *Proza 1915-1958* (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan, 1961), p.241.
[5] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.2.
[6] Steven G. Kellman, 'The Fiction of Self-Begetting,' *MLN*, Vol. 91, No. 6 (December, 1976), p.1245.
[7] Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 2006), p.35.

> The chief enterprise of some of our best modern writers. This is the "creative autobiography" – the more-or-less fictional work of art about the development of the artist himself…involves the question of the meaning of the author's life and the purpose of his sufferings; is resolved by the author's discovery of his literary identity and vocation and the attendant need to give up worldly involvement for artistic detachment; and includes its own poetic, and sometimes the circumstances of its own genesis.[8]

The choice of art over society is exemplified by the ending of James Joyce's *A Portrait of The Artist as Young Man* (1916), which sees Stephen Dedalus (like Joyce himself) leaving Ireland in order to find, he hopes, artistic freedom:

> *April* 26. Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the created conscience of my race.
>
> *April* 27. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.[9]

The self-constructed nature of the artist is reinforced by the analogy Stephen makes to a blacksmith at the forge, as well as his appeal to the 'old artificer.' Stephen aims to inhabit the role of artist, like an actor who assumes a part and puts on a costume. Stephen turns to self-imposed exile: he sees leaving home and giving up everything he knows as the beginning of a journey he must take in order to continue his process of artistic self-creation, freeing himself

[8] M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Traditional and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1973), p.80.
[9] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.213.

of social, political, and religious constraints in order to focus entirely on his art.[10] This contrasts with early examples of the genre, especially Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796) in which the artist-hero dreams of a career in the theatre but eventually gives up his art to become a surgeon. This denial of artistic ambition in order to successfully assimilate with society is more compliant with the Bildungsroman tradition which sees unity of the individual with the social order as the ultimate objective. The Künstlerroman, in its celebration and elevation of artistic nature, instead sees freedom of artistic expression as sacrosanct – a conviction which Joyce's Stephen exemplifies. Justification for this belief lies in the notion 'that the creative artist is a special type of individual in society…specifically a Romantic notion, circulating in popular socio-historical communities.'[11] Maurice Beebe's 1964 study *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero from Goethe to Joyce*, finds that this Romantic concept of the artist as a 'special' or superior being originates alongside the birth of the novel, rising literacy levels, and increased print circulation:

> As the ability to read became more widespread, more people became interested in the character of the storyteller; and each portrait of the artist helped to create an audience for another. At the same time, however, the increase in the reading public encouraged the separation of the artist from the populace.[12]

Beebe's enquiry into the social history of art finds that the Renaissance artist's association with aristocratic patrons and the Church 'helped to give him a hold over the middle-class

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[10] Stephen's self-enforced exile is a more extreme take on Virginia Woolf's notion of the necessity of the female novelist to have her own space, as put forth in *A Room of One's Own* (1929).
[11] Evy Varsamopoulou, *The Poetics of the Kunstlerinroman and the Aesthetics of the Sublime* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p.xii.
[12] Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero from Goethe to Joyce* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp.23-4.

audience of later centuries.'[13] When this association ended, the middle-classes attempted to reduce the artist's status to that of mere entertainer; however the nineteenth-century saw the beginning of a reclassification of art into high and low – for the masses and for the elite. The exclusivity of 'serious art…helped further to exalt the position of the true artist.'[14] The writer's changing social status made him a pervasive yet intriguing figure; the Romantic veneration of the artist-figure marked a turning point in literary study 'towards the subject who makes or creates the work, towards the poet or author.'[15] For the Romantics, the figure of the artist was so important because the processes of creation remained mysterious: the concept of unconscious, uncontrolled creation was crucial to the Romantic elevation of the artist above the rest of society. Historically akin to that of the Muse, or of divine inspiration, this concept of artistic invention is of fundamental importance in the artist-novel; a fictionalised account of such creation, which may illuminate the artistic process, is crucial to the popular reception of such works. In his study focusing on the origin of selfhood in modernist writers, Finn Fordham observes that:

> Writing comes…to be understood as issuing from somewhere other than the self, and as producing not a replication of the self but a mask…the writer at work…provides an enduring romantic emblem of a central and arguably bourgeois aspiration of the human, which is to produce themselves if possible from out of themselves.[16]

For the writing, writing about the creative process may enable him/her to comprehend something that remains an enigma to both writer and reader. Beebe states that 'any writer knows that there is a moment when calculation stops and the author seems to be carried along

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[13] Ibid, p.23.
[14] Ibid, p.24.
[15] Andrew Bennett, *The Author* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p.3.
[16] Finn Fordham, *I do, I undo, I redo: the textual genesis of Modernist Selves in Hopkins, Yeats, Conrad, Forster, Joyce and Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.8-9.

by a force beyond himself.'[17] This notion of a creative force as being distinct from the writer was strengthened by developing thought on "the self" at the beginning of the twentieth-century.[18] This nascent thinking on the subject of the self has a particular impact on modernism, remaining a resonant theme for much of the twentieth-century, both in fiction and criticism. The mythologised position of the writer is one desired, according to Fordham, by:

> People from any number of different ways of life – bankers, estate agents, civil servants, footballers, redeemed criminals, abused housewives, nurses, analysts, academics – day dream, often frustratedly, that they have novels or a novelist or a 'writer' seething inside them eager for expression…the desire to project oneself, through the image of such a myth, just as with any of the many mythic heroic forms that dominate culture and provide role models.[19]

The Romantic figure of the artist as separate to and elevated from the rest of society has given way to a new interpretation of the artist as a social outcast, as Roberta Seret discerns: 'the fate of the artist…to be ignored, misunderstood or condemned by the same society to which he has offered his gifts.'[20] In his essay 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov' (1936), Walter Benjamin suggests that, unlike the novel, the story depended upon experience through which the storyteller might counsel his listeners, building a community around him which looked to him as sage or teacher. The novel is created by 'the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself…is himself uncounselled and cannot counsel others.'[21] As Stephen is warned in *A Portrait of the Artist*, by his friend

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[17] Beebe, p.9.
[18] See, for example Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989); ed., Roy Porter, *Rewriting the Self : Histories From the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1997); Paul Ricouer, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992) and ed., Shaun Gallagher and Jonathan Shear, *Models of the Self* (Thorverton: Imprint Academic, 1999).
[19] Fordham, pp.9-10.
[20] Roberta Seret, *Voyage Into Creativity: The Modern Künstlerroman* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), p.3.
[21] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), p.87.

Cranly, as an artist he will be 'Alone, quite alone.'[22] Many of the twentieth-century novels which focus on the novelist-character have a tendency to adhere to the caricature of the novelist as solitary outcast, perpetuating a trend which has now become a mainstay of popular culture.

Works examining aspects of the novelist-character in both North and South American literature include Lucille Kerr's *Reclaiming the Author: Figures and Fictions from Spanish America* (1992); David Williams's *Confessional Fiction: A Portrait of the Artist in the Canadian Novel* (1991) and Krzysztof Andrzejczak's *The Writer in the Writing: Author as Hero in Postwar American Fiction* (1998), whilst Paul Franssen and Ton Hoenselaars' study, *The Author as Character: Representing Historical Writers in Western Literature* (1999) enquires into the appearance of real, historical authors as characters in other writers' fictions. Along with these works from the 1990s on the author, the artist and the writer as character, are works on the *Künstlerroman*, such as Roberta Seret's *Voyage Into Creativity: The Modern Künstlerroman* (1992), which demonstrates a resurgence of interest in the artist-hero, a variation on the more general Bildungsroman. Foremost amongst preceding studies, especially in terms of importance to this thesis, is Beebe's *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts*. Beebe's reading of the artist-hero in Balzac, Henry James, Proust and Joyce concludes with his statement that:

> Another book could be written on the portrait-of-the-artist novel after Joyce…additional chapters on writers such as Thomas Mann, André Gide, Thomas Wolfe, Samuel Beckett and Lawrence Durrell…but my reading of their artist-novels has not convinced me that they have changed the pattern in

[22] *A Portrait of the Artist*, p.208.

> any really significant way. They would only provide further examples of what I hope has already been established.[23]

Contrary to this Beebe's statement, Lee T. Lemon's *Portraits of the Artist in Contemporary Fiction* (1985) begins with the premise that 'between the generation of James Joyce and the generation of John Fowles, the fictional portrait of the artist changed notably.'[24] Although Beebe satisfies his own notions of the development of the artist-hero, his complacency fails to take into account the difference which exists between the generalised artist-character/artist-hero and the novelist-character, especially evident in twentieth-century British fiction post-Joyce. Whilst Lemon's study considers the contemporary artist-character in the work of Lawrence Durrell, Doris Lessing, Patrick White, John Fowles and John Barth, like Beebe he does not distinguish between the novelist-character and the generalised artist-character.

This thesis will demonstrate that the novelist-character stands apart from Beebe's conception of the artist-hero and its origins in the Künstlerroman: within the parameters of this study the novelist-character is a *protagonist* yet not always a *hero.* From the 1920s to the present day, depictions of the novelist seem more redolent of the anti-hero and therefore seemingly at odds with other types of artist-hero, as defined by Beebe, and diverging from Joyce's modernist evaluation of the artist as being 'like the God of creation.'[25] David Simmons's work on the anti-hero identifies a significant link between this character type and metafiction:

> Certainly, surfiction and metafiction share many characteristics in common with those novels that foreground the anti-heroic figure. Fundamentally both are born out of a rebellious desire to subvert what the author (or the reader) considers the standard conventions of fiction…the similarity between the an-

[23] Beebe, p.299.
[24] Lee T. Lemon, *Portraits of the Artist in Contemporary Fiction* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), p.ix.
[25] *A Portrait*, p.181.

> ti-hero and metafiction might, instead, indicate that there is a link between 'naturalist' character-based novels and 'postmodern' characterless novels.[26]

Simmons focuses his study on American literature from the 1960s onwards, and he finds that this period of US fiction has been profoundly influenced by the Second World War and the ensuing post-war era. The impact of both world wars begins to manifest earlier in British fiction and has direct repercussions upon the character of the artist-hero. Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* (1921) is one of the first novels to take up the artist-character after WWI. Huxley's portrayal of the poet Denis Stone demonstrates how attitudes towards the artist-figure had changed – with Beebe finding that 'both the artist and the adolescent had become hackneyed subjects of fiction'[27] – even amongst Huxley's own undeniably bohemian circle, which he satirises in *Crome Yellow*. Richard Aldington's *The Death of A Hero* (1929) features an artist-character, George Winterbourne, who enlists in the army and dies at the Front. Aldington's novel represented the reality of war – even the romanticised figure of the artist and the poet could, and did, die alongside other men. The earliest novels discussed as case studies in this thesis – Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928) and W. Somerset Maugham's *Cakes and Ale* (1930) – are roughly contemporaneous with Aldington's novel,[28] and it is from this point on that Beebe's artist-hero all but ceases to appear, but the novelist-character begins to proliferate, especially in the 1950s-60s, when over half of the novels discussed in this study were written. The various representations of the novelist-character from the late 1920s tend to present a character who is flawed and fallible; lacking in power – both within the world of the novel and over their own artistic output; alienated from society, and often verging on foolish. Such depictions call to mind the eponymous narrator of T. S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Al-

[26] David Simmons, *The Anti-Hero in the American Novel: From Joseph Heller to Kurt Vonnegut* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp.3-4.
[27] Beebe, p.4.
[28] As well as with Virginia Woolf's 1927 novel *To The Lighthouse*, which features the artist-character Lily Briscoe.

fred Prufrock' (1915), who in refusing a heroic role (of Hamlet), instead assumes a part which, by his own admission, renders him as being:

> Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
>
> At times, indeed, almost ridiculous —
>
> Almost, at times, the Fool.[29]

Recognising that he is 'full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse,' makes Prufrock redolent of a writer figure – one who knows his limitations and recognises the void behind his highly polished prose. The role of Polonius, which Prufrock assumes rather than taking the leading role, symbolically leads to the character's demise as he waits in the wings, eavesdropping upon the action on stage – a parallel that could easily be drawn with the status of the author in mid-twentieth-century criticism.[30] Eliot's Prufrock is characteristic of the anti-hero – his alienation, inability to act, label of 'fool,' and distinctly un-Romanised portrayal are shared with many of the novelist-characters featured in this thesis. Prufrock also appears to find it 'impossible to say just what I mean!'[31] and often finds he has been misinterpreted – 'That is not what I meant at all.'[32] Prufrock's verbal impotence seems to anticipate the question Benjamin poses in 'The Storyteller': 'Was it noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefields grown silent?'[33] The figure of the storyteller, Benjamin goes on to say,[34] had already been all but rescinded by the invention of printing and the novel. The inherent isolation of the novelist coupled with the silencing effect of the war have meant that, in the post-war period, the anti-hero is the only viable protagonist – as well as being the only potential form the artis-

[29] T. S. Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' lines 117-19 in *Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p.16.
[30] See 'Paper Authors' section, the last section of Chapter One.
[31] Ibid, line 104.
[32] Ibid, line 97 (repeated line 110).
[33] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p.84.
[34] See further discussion of 'The Storyteller,' p.26.

tic protagonist can take – because the 'forms that once supported the heroic can now only be judged as archaic or obsolete. In their place the anti-heroic begins to dominate as an appropriate model for the representation of twentieth-century themes such as dissidence and individualist alienation.'[35]

There is, however, another archetypal character that stands in opposition to the hero: the everyman. Like the anti-hero, the everyman is a more realistic and less idealised character type: an explicitly ordinary individual. Michel de Certeau states that 'the role of this general character (everyman and nobody) is to formulate a universal connection.'[36] This character type is not overtly representative of any particular community but is still one that the reader can easily identify with. This correlates with Andrew Milner's analysis of the novel's hero/protagonist as being distinct from that of the epic, which is 'organized around the hero as representative of a community, moving within a world of immanent values, the novel is built around the unrepresentative "problematic hero," moving in search of authentic values.'[37] This epic hero is a symbolic figure who embodies the potential in every individual – thus 'the mighty hero of extraordinary power…is each of us: not the physical self visible in the mirror, but the king within.'[38] Lucien Goldmann also points out the differences between the hero of the novel and the hero of more traditional literary forms, saying that 'the novel is an epic genre characterized, unlike the folk tale or the epic poem itself, by the insurmountable rupture between the hero and the world.'[39] The folk and epic hero are archetypal and, as a representative of a community, less individualised and less invested with interiority than the hero of the novel. This modern hero is, by definition, set against and apart from society, which is a characteristic he shares with the romanticised artist; Andrew Bennett notes that 'the figure of the

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[35] Simmons, p.10.
[36] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p.2.
[37] Andrew Milner, *Literature, Culture and Society* (London: University College London Press, 1996), pp.89-90.
[38] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p.365.
[39] Lucien Goldmann, *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1975), p.2.

author as uniquely separate from society is an important dimension of the construction of the Romantic author, and indeed for the modern author more generally.'[40] Making the hero of a novel into an artist reinforces attributes such as individuality, sensitivity, and independence from the social order, whilst artistic integrity supplies a ready-made motive for their frequent estrangement from community. Sean O'Faolain's *The Vanishing Hero* (1956) looks at novelists of the 1920s, including Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, Joyce, Graham Greene, and Virginia Woolf, explicitly examining the disintegration of the socially constructed hero in modern novels – many of which feature artist-characters. O'Faolain defines the hero as a social construct, disassociating the epic character from the anti-hero of modern literature, of whom he states:

> This personage is not a social creation. He is his own creation, that is, the author's personal creation. He is a much less neat and tidy concept, since he is always presented as groping, puzzled, cross, mocking, frustrated and isolated, manfully or blunderingly trying to establish his own personal, supra-social codes. He is sometimes ridiculous through lack of perspicacity, accentuated by a foolhardy if attractive personal courage. He is sometimes intelligent…whatever he is, weak or brave, brainy or bewildered, his one abiding characteristic is that, like his author-creator, he is never able to see any Pattern in life and rarely its Destination.[41]

Lacking the distinct trajectory of the heroic quest the anti-hero, whom O'Faolain equates with his author-creator, may have more individuality than the traditional hero but he is possessed with little agency; as a result his actions can seem ineffectual and foolish, but also more mimetically human.

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[40] Bennett, *The Author*, p.37.
[41] Sean O'Faolain, *The Vanishing Hero: Studies in Novelists of the Twenties* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956), pp.16-17.

The crux of this thesis is an enquiry into the purpose that the novelist-character serves in each novel studied, as well as perceiving how the general treatment of the character type alters depending upon their function(s) within the text. The first two chapters investigate the figure of the novelist and how different readings of this figure have been constructed and consequently informed the portrayal of the novelist within fiction. These preliminary chapters support the case studies which make up Chapters Three, Four and Five, each addressing a different deployment of the novelist-character. Chapter One examines and interrogates concepts of authorship, looking at some of the conflicting ideologies which surround the figure of the novelist as well as other kinds of artist, especially the poet. Reviewing two crucial eras as instrumental in the cultivation of the artist figure – the Romantic period and its reverence of the artist, the antecedent of the Victorian novel with its mass literary appeal – this analysis aims to demonstrate how contemporary views of authorship and the novelist or writing figure have come about, before turning to author-theory, the notion of the implied author, and the suggested impact of these upon the figures of the author and the novelist. Chapter Two explores ways in which the ideas of authorship and the novelist have been historically constructed within society, both by authors themselves – particularly focusing on their depictions of the novelist-character – and within media and marketing forums, which impact the reader's image of the novelist. Chapters Three, Four and Five each look at an aspect of the novelist-character, beginning with autobiographical representations of authorship and the life of a writer; the use of the novelist-character as a framing device within the novel, where the character's role as a novelist is designed to produce a metafictional frame narrative. Chapter Five looks at various aspects of the novelist's role and examines the metaphorically performative nature of the novelist-character; the levels of power and control they have over the narratives they appear in; and how these characters (as writers) have utilised aspects of their own lives within their work.

Kerr's study concentrated on six influential Spanish-American authors, whilst Kums restricted himself to three – all of whom also appear in this thesis. However, the huge variability of the novelist-character and the roles which it can be seen to perform necessitates an exploration of a wider cross-section of twentieth-century British and Irish literature. To this end the last three chapters of this thesis have been organised as a series of case studies focusing either on individual novelists or, where appropriate, two or three comparable treatments of novelist-characters. The selection of novels has largely been governed by the categorisation of works into the suggested modes of representation – autobiographical, as part of a frame narrative, or metaphorical. Many of the authors studied in this thesis cannot be seen to explicitly engage with the platitudes of the major literary movements of the twentieth-century – modernism and postmodernism – but rather with an enduring tradition of metafiction and self-reflexivity in the novel, which, finds Waugh, 'is as old (if not older) than the novel itself.'[42] This lack of identification with modernism or postmodernism, amongst other factors, has meant that several of these novelists have come to be neglected in contemporary analysis. This thesis, because of its particular focus on the correspondingly overlooked novelist-character, has found that such novelists offer a significant alternative to some of the more ubiquitous authors associated with twentieth-century literature. As metafiction is often seen as a prominent feature of postmodernism, the novels examined in this thesis – even those written before the mid-century – could be, and often are, classed as postmodern. However I argue these novels should be seen as independent of either modernism or postmodernism: this classification positions them as outsiders, a status which is reflected in that of the novelist-character.

As previously suggested, the novelist-character does not significantly deteriorate over the course of the twentieth-century therefore, rather than presenting a chronological assessment of how this character type has changed throughout the century, the twenty or so novelists who

[42] Waugh, p.5.

make up this selection have been chosen in order to best represent the different functions the novelist-character can be used to perform. However, the choice of thematic over chronological organisation should not be construed as a dismissal of the impact historical arguments within this thesis. In the interests of showing sufficient diversity it has sometimes been necessary to curtail the amount of attention each novelist has received; however, the resulting breadth of this study make it one which is incomparable within current criticism.

II. WHAT IS A NOVELIST?

> Some memories of the visit: Wystan writing indoors with the curtains drawn; Christopher writing out in the garden, with his shirt off in the sunshine.[43]

During the spring of 1936 Christopher Isherwood was visited at his lodgings in Sintra, Portugal, by his friend the poet W. H. Auden. Auden arrived to begin work on what would become the second of the pair's collaborative plays, *The Ascent of F.6* (1937). The peculiarity of each's writing habits, despite their common purpose, makes a succinct parable of the difference between the poet and the novelist: whilst the poet Auden writes under artificial light in a darkened room, cut off from nature and reality, Isherwood writes outside, fully exposed to the elements and the world. In spite of the fact that neither is pursuing their usual form of art, both keep their own particular (or peculiar) writerly nature. A decade earlier Virginia Woolf's essay 'Life and The Novelist' (1926), had made similar observations regarding the working practice of novelists, as compared to other types of artist:

> The novelist – it is his distinction and his danger – is terribly exposed to life. Other artists, partially at least, withdraw; they shut themselves up for weeks alone with a dish of apples and a paint box, or a roll of music paper and a piano. When they emerge it is to forget and distract themselves but

[43] Christopher Isherwood, *Christopher and his Kind* (London: Magnum Books, 1978), p.179.

> the novelist never forgets and is seldom distracted…the novelist, then, who is a slave to life and concocts his books out of the froth of the moment.[44]

The novelist, Woolf declares, is an artist unlike the painter or musician; and, we infer, the poet, sculptor or dramatist. The language employed to describe the novelist – 'distinction and danger,' 'terribly exposed' – indicate that she regards the novelist akin to an adventurer, rather than a cloistered artist. Far removed from conceptions of art as a divine gift, Woolf holds the novelist as 'a slave to life,' his 'art' is a burden: grunt work. Auden's poem 'The Novelist' (1938), written for Isherwood upon the auspicious occasion of him catching clap in Brussels,[45] serves as a metaphor for the differences not just between the two friends, but as a dichotomy between poet and novelist. Equating the novelist's work with lowly toil, Auden states that the novelist:

> For, to achieve his lightest wish, he must
> Become the whole of boredom, subject to
> Vulgar complaints like love, among the Just
> Be just, among the Filthy filthy too,
> And in his own weak person, if he can,
> Must suffer dully all the wrongs of Man.[46]

The poem dispels the assumption that the two vocations can be seen as synonymous; although both fall under terms like 'writer', 'author' or the even broader 'artist', Auden remarks upon the fundamental differences between the two. The opening stanza of 'The Novelist,' makes this distinction between the poet and the novelist clear:

> Encased in talent like a uniform,

[44] Virginia Woolf, *Collected Essays Vol. II* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), pp. 131-36.
[45] Isherwood, p.245.
[46] W. H. Auden, 'The Novelist,' lines 9-14 in *Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), p.180.

The rank of every poet is well known;
They can amaze us like a thunderstorm,
Or die so young, or live for years alone.
They can dash forward like hussars: but he
Must struggle out of his boyish gift and learn
How to be plain and awkward, how to be
One after whom none think it worth to turn.[47]

The military association points to the restrictions of the poet – 'encased in talent' – suggests that he is constricted, bound and imprisoned even, by such talent. 'The rank of every poet' implies a rigid social order, furthering the lack of freedom, as opposed to that of the novelist. But, in return for this freedom, the novelist 'must suffer dully' Auden affirms, taking for his subject the tedium of everyday life; losing any poetic flair to become 'plain and awkward.' Unlike the poets – romanticised as 'dying young,' or else isolated in old age, glamorous and dashing 'like hussars' – Auden paints an image of the novelist's work as 'vulgar' and 'filthy,' but also 'just;' the rhythm of the poem changes to become ponderous and plodding, showing the novelist as a clumsy beast, or like a common labourer. In saying that the novelist 'must struggle out of his boyish gift,' Auden proposes that novelists all begin with an adolescent gift for poetry – accentuated by comparing the poet to a thunderstorm, a natural occurrence – and that this gift develops, or is struggled out of, and the novelist must learn 'how to be plain and awkward.' Significantly Auden also states that the novelist must emulate his society: 'among the Just/Be just, among the Filthy filthy too.' In his 1953 *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, M. H. Abrams traces the changing position occupied by the poet in the reception of the work, finding that:

[47] Ibid, lines 1-8.

> Through most of the eighteenth century, the poet's invention and imagination were made thoroughly dependent for their materials – their ideas and 'images' – on the external universe and the literary models the poet had to imitate; while the persistent stress laid on his need for judgement and art – the mental surrogates, in effect, of the requirements of a cultivated audience – held the poet strictly responsible to the audience for whose pleasure he exerted his creative ability. Gradually, however, the stress was shifted more and more to the poet's natural genius, creative imagination, and emotional spontaneity, at the expense of the opposing attributes of judgement, learning, and artful restraints. As a result the audience gradually receded into the ground, giving place to the poet himself, and his own mental powers and emotional needs, as the predominant cause and even the end and test of art.[48]

The shifting emphasis from the intellectual and detached to emotional and personal in poetry distinguished the Romantic poets from those of the eighteenth-century; they positioned themselves as the single most important aspect of how their work was consumed and understood, giving rise to the notion of the artist or poet as God-like. Darrin McMahon suggests that 'only when artists were freed of the constraints of mimesis…could the cult of the original creator, the man of genius, come into its own.'[49] In many ways this Romantic rejection of mimesis anticipates the link Simmons makes between metafiction and the anti-hero; as McMahon goes on to say 'the connection between genius and transgression was being explored by the poets, philosophers and artists of the Romantic generation.'[50]

[48] M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.21.
[49] Darrin M. McMahon, *Divine Fury: A History of Genius* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), p.72.
[50] Ibid, p.145.

Abrams remarks upon the distinction of intent between the prose writer and the poet, quoting John Stuart Mill: 'In prose, the main purpose of the writer or speaker is to inform, or exhibit truth…in poetry, on the other hand, the information furnished is merely subsidiary to the conveyance of the emotion.'[51] The implication here is that, even when prose cannot be considered mimetic, its purpose is still to express truth; indeed many of the novels discussed in later parts of this thesis, especially in Chapter Four, demonstrate postmodern fiction's preoccupation with the representation and interrogation of truth. Poetry, both Mill and Abrams conclude, concentrates solely on emotion. A similar distinction is made by Mary Shelley, discussing the genesis of *Frankenstein*. She writes that, upon Byron's proposal that each member of their party should write a ghost story, her husband 'Shelley, more apt to embody ideas and sentiments in the radiance of brilliant imagery, and in the music of the most melodious verse that adorns our language, than to invent the machinery of a story, commenced one founded on the experiences of his early life.'[52] Shelley's rendering of her husband's work as 'radiance of brilliance' and 'melodious verse' as compared to the systematic 'machinery of a story,' demonstrates her awareness, even as a young woman and a fledgling novelist, of the essential difference between the way in which poets and novelists' minds work and create. Clare Pettitt establishes Mary Shelley as rejecting 'any comparison of her own literary work with that of the male Romantic poets…casting herself, significantly, in the role of mechanical inventor, rather than Romantic creator who 'embodies' his visions, she implies a distinction between poetry and fiction.'[53]

[51] Abrams, p.322.
[52] Mary Shelley, 'Appendix A,' in *Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus* 1818 Text (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.194.
[53] Clare Pettitt, *Patent Inventions: Intellectual Property and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.19-20.

In his study of contemporary artist-characters post-Joyce, Lemon distinguishes between two opposing models for fictional artist figures: he terms the pre-World War II protagonists 'Byronic,' and those postwar 'Wordsworthian.' Of the earlier type he says:

> The arrogance is in part the outgrowth of an unflinching sense of mission and a faith that the artist's gift neither can nor should be rationally defended or explained…if one is a Byronic artist, both the message and the messenger are sacred…I do not know precisely what led to the death of the fictional Byronic artist-hero. I suspect there is a kind of natural life span to the stereotypes we create to help us understand our world.[54]

Lemon goes on to question whether contemporary attitudes towards God have impacted upon our conception of the artist-figure, if such a figure is seen as an oracle of sorts, before turning to his definition of the contemporary artist-character:

> The Wordsworthian artist…[is] primarily an ordinary human being trying to live in a world peopled with individuals as important as himself. The artist is likely to have a sense of what he is doing but, unlike the historical Wordsworth, is also likely to recognize his own fuzziness about the place his work occupies in the grand scheme of things…The artist-hero of most contemporary fiction is very much an anti-artist, in the same sense in which many contemporary fictional protagonists are anti-heroes.[55]

Lemon's opposing models for the artist-character, along with Shelley's positioning of herself as inventor, show the novelist as moving away from Romantic notions of artistic genius, instead equating the role with that of the more ordinary individual – instead of a genius or god, they are inventors, craftsman, or even labourers, thus aligning the novelist with the figure of

[54] Lemon, p.xi.
[55] Ibid, p.xiii.

the storyteller over that of Lemon's Byronic artist-hero, or Shelley's conception of her husband and his ilk. In 'The Storyteller' Benjamin discusses the changes in methods of communicating wisdom and experience; quoting Leskov, he states that 'writing…is to me no liberal art, but a craft.'[56] Benjamin's storyteller, observes Ivan Kreilkamp, 'is not only a simple man who becomes a sage, he is also a labouring man whose very voice is a form of manual craft.'[57] Kreilkamp explores the notion that Victorian literature re-imagines and re-appropriates the figure of the storyteller, creating a community of readers around the author, whilst Pettitt writes that the use of serialisation in publishing meant that 'the reading public were encouraged to engage in the experience of assembling the "story" themselves, part by part. As the boundary between the artwork and its consumers became less distinct, the form became increasingly resistant to traditional notions of 'art.''[58] The novel was seen as a truer reflection of social reality than preceding literary forms, as it comprises characters, plots, and settings that the general reader could directly relate to. The changed perception of the novelist figure in the Victorian era may be seen as a rejection of Romantic conceptions of artistic creation, as Richard Cronin observes 'writing for them does not have a secret, inexplicable origin enclosed in the mind of the poet, rather it originates from the world that we all share.'[59] This more pragmatic view of the writer or novelist figure as an ordinary being is mirrored by and through the subject matter of the novel, which was not only more accessible, but also more relevant to a wider cross section of society: it appealed to the everyman, reflecting the ordinary individual. Ian Watt has identified the novel as a convincing expression of specific human experience, concluding that 'the novel is in nothing so characteristic of our culture as

[56] Nikolai Leskov quoted in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p.92.
[57] Ivan Kreilkamp, *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.10.
[58] Pettitt, p.21.
[59] Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.259.

in the way it reflects this characteristic orientation of modern thought.'[60] Poetry, by contrast, is an elemental form, as Christopher Cauldwell discusses:

> Poetry expresses in a special manner the genetic instinctive part of the individual, as opposed, say, to the novel, which expresses the individual as an adapted type, as a social character, as the man realised in society. Such an art form as the novel could therefore only arise in a society where economic differentiation gives such scope for the realisation of individual differences…in this sense poetry is the child of Nature, just as the developed novel is the child of the sophistication of modern culture.[61]

The view of poetry as elemental and natural, Wordsworth's 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,'[62] goes some way to explaining the large number of writers who begin writing poetry before 'graduating' to the novel. Amongst the authors considered in this thesis alone it would be easier to say which did *not* begin their writing careers as poets before developing into novel writers.[63] Considering Auden's interpretation of poetry as a 'boyish gift,' it is unsurprising that so many writers start out as poets; it is perhaps more unexpected so many go on to completely abandon poetry for fiction, and that many initially seem to do so for financial reasons. Thomas Hardy turned from fiction to poetry, however he, it would seem, is an exception to the general trend. Muriel Spark, for example, saw herself foremost as a poet and writer of criticism, she even had "POETA" inscribed on her headstone. Spark's biographer Martin Stannard tells us that she 'had no aspirations to be a writer of prose fiction,'[64] until

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[60] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), p.22. [1957]
[61] Christopher Cauldwell, *Illusion and Reality: a Study of the Sources of Poetry* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1946), p.21.
[62] William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads and Others* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2002), p.8.
[63] There is no evidence of poetry written by Anthony Powell, Dodie Smith, Martin Amis, William Boyd or Jonathan Coe.
[64] Martin Stannard, *Muriel Spark: the biography* (London: Phoenix, 2010), p.122.

tempted by the monetary prize of an *Observer* short story competition. She was almost forty by the time her first novel *The Comforters* was published in 1957, having spent her twenties and thirties writing poetry and critical biographies. Although she then wrote a further twenty-one novels she still clung to her early art, romanticising it and delighting when friends, such as the poet Ned Gorman, 'treated her as a poet, which she loved, sometimes feeling expelled from the Eden of her original incarnation as an artist.'[65] Yet despite her professed love of poetry and the idea of being a poet, she made her name (and living) through fiction, releasing only two further collections of poems amidst her twenty-two novels.

Spark at least seems to elevate the position of poet over that of novelist; the novel's connection with (and dependence on) everyday life, 'the whole of boredom,'[66] makes it less 'artful' than poetry – it is more realistic than idealistic. Unlike poetry in which, according to Cauldwell, 'the world of external reality recedes, and the world of instinct, the affective emotional linkage between the words, rises to the view and becomes the world of reality' – the novel replaces reality with the world inside the novel, which is 'a more or less consistent mock reality.'[67] Does this make the position of the novelist more humble than other types of artist? Certainly the equation of the novelist with storyteller suggests that the novel (as a written story) is more crafted than the spontaneous art of the poet; Woolf's novelist 'concocts' from the 'froth of the moment,' engaging with everyday life whilst other artists sequester themselves away, like Auden in his darkened room. Roland Barthes's 1954 *The Writer on Holiday* takes a sardonic view of the writer's relationship with reality; although he does not specify that this writing figure is a novelist, it is clear that writing – as opposed to painting, music, or even poetry – is singled out as the profession and/or vocation that Barthes derides (also that to which he himself belongs). Significantly, Barthes also places the writer next to the common worker:

[65] Ibid, p.272.
[66] Auden, 'The Novelist,' line 10.
[67] Cauldwell, p.200.

> What proves the wonderful singularity of the writer, is that during the holiday in question, which he takes alongside factory workers and shop assistants, he unlike them does not stop, if not actually working, at least producing. One is writing his memoirs, another is correcting proofs, yet another is preparing his next book…unlike the other workers, who change their essence, and on the beach are no longer anything but holiday-makers, the writer keeps his writer's nature everywhere.[68]

Rather than adhering to a Romantic idea of the artist as separated from the masses, Barthes playfully apes the figure of the writer, imagining him scribbling away, even on the beach. Manual labour and commercialism are linked to writing by the association with 'factory workers and shop assistants,' however, unlike the other workers the writer's holiday is pure fiction: he cannot simply stop 'producing.' Barthes touches on the idea of the 'writer's nature' and creative potential, however this is a decidedly un-romanticised reading of the relationship between the writer and his work. Like the proverbial 'busman's holiday,' the writer's holiday is merely a change of scene, as the work is so entrenched within the day-to-day life of the writer he cannot help but keep going; he is, no matter where he goes or what he does, still a writer because the material that he works with, life itself, is ubiquitous. In Elizabeth Taylor's 1957 *Angel*, when the eponymous protagonist is advised by her publisher to take a break from writing, she responds: 'A holiday wouldn't do any good or make any difference. I should have to take myself with me.'[69]

Every overheard conversation, every digested news story, might provide the basis for the next work: Somerset Maugham's travels in the East, like Barthes's writer's holiday, were no mere vacation as they supplied him with a wealth of real-life tales which he turned into fiction. In her biography of him, Selina Hastings writes that 'as a writer of fiction Maugham

[68] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2009) p.20.
[69] Elizabeth Taylor, *Angel* (London: Virago, 2013), p.118.

was a realist: his imagination needed actual people and events to work on and these his travels amply furnished…during those months spent listening to strangers telling him their private dramas.'[70] The need for this proximity to life in order to write partially explains the plethora of autobiographical novels for, as Thomas Wolfe said: 'all serious work in fiction is autobiographical.'[71] In order to write her first novel *The Comforters*, Spark used her own experiences of a nervous breakdown and her recent Catholic conversion; the voices she heard become those overheard by her protagonist Caroline, an academic who hears the voice of someone narrating her own actions, as if she were a character in a novel. By the end of the novel Caroline is able to use her experiences of this to write a novel of her own (and take a working holiday):

> Caroline had finished her book about novels. Now she announced she was going away on a long holiday. She was going to write a novel.
>
> 'I don't call that a holiday,' said Helena, 'not if you mean to spend it writing a novel.'
>
> 'This is a holiday of obligation,' Caroline replied.
>
> 'What is it to be about?'
>
> Caroline answered, 'Characters in a novel.'[72]

Beebe's study identifies two opposing aspects of the artist's nature: the 'ivory tower' which exalts art above all else and the 'sacred fount' which sees art as the recreation or reimagining of experience. Beebe quotes C.G. Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933) on the creative person who, according to Jung, is 'a duality or a synthesis of contradictory attitudes. On the one side he is a human being with a personal life, while on the other side he is an imper-

[70] Selina Hastings, *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham* (London: John Murray, 2010), p.324.
[71] Quoted in Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn: a study of Five French Realists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.459.
[72] Muriel Spark, *The Comforters* (London: Penguin, 1964), p.202.

sonal, creative process.'[73] Both Woolf and Barthes's essays equate the novelist solely with Beebe's sacred fount; other artists – Woolf particularly mentions painter and musician – are typically seen to be associated with the ivory tower. As the novelist writes both from and about life, concocts rather than creates, the figure seems somewhat demystified and less romanticised than other types of artist. In *The Writer in the Writing* Andrzejczak argues that after the 1950s, novelist-characters are less concerned with the opposition of the ivory tower and sacred fount: 'the heroes typically perceive neither worldly experience as a primal source of wisdom, nor aloofness as a foundation of inspiration. Also…they do not aim at internal equilibrium and order because they no longer hold that it is the writer's responsibility to balance art and life.'[74] However Beebe's study perpetuates the romantic view, the myth of the artist, because he fails to separate out the different types of artistic vocation – he merely asserts that although 'the hero of an artist-novel may be a sculptor or a composer, as a self portrait of his creator he is always a writer, it is apparent that "the artist" established in fiction is always a literary man.'[75] This generalised artistic character supports the notion that art is a lifestyle as much as a vocation – Stephen Dedalus thinks of himself as an artist before having actually created anything resembling an art work: in *A Portrait* his self-creation as 'the artist' can be seen as emblematic of the fluidity of the artistic vocation, in that little to no physical art is produced. Yet he regards himself, above all else, as an artist. Beebe also fails to take the encoded masculinity of the artist-character into consideration. He makes mention of a mere handful of female authors – Willa Cather, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Mary Shelley, Ayn Rand, Fanny Burney and Woolf – and then only in passing.[76]

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[73] C.G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, trans W.S. Dell and Cary F. Barnes (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co, 1945), p.194.
[74] Krzysztof Andrzejczak, *The Writer in the Writing: Author as Hero in Postwar American Fiction* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999), p.xi.
[75] Beebe, p.v.
[76] This issue will be addressed in the section 'Writing the Female Novelist' in Chapter Two.

The only artist-hero Beebe considers who *is* explicitly a novelist – as opposed to a generalised artist – is the eponymous 'hero' of Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850). Significantly, Beebe views Dickens's treatment of David-the-artist as remarkably subtle, stating that Dickens:

> Does not impose a theory of the artist upon his hero, but lets the vocation emerge as a result of David's unique experiences – does not, in fact, consciously write a portrait-of-the-artist-novel until, writing his own life story in symbolic form, he discovers that his hero, like himself, has become an artist almost unawares.[77]

Although he never addresses the difference, Beebe has arguably revealed that one exists between the novelist-character and that of the more general artist – the 'theory of the artist' does not apply because the novelist's propinquity to life makes him uniquely bound to the 'froth of the moment' which is then rendered into fiction, rather than being bound to the Romantic notion of unique artistic creation. Dickens's own conception of the novelist seems to be divided – he was notoriously hard-working and adopted an industrious approach to his work yet, as Pettitt writes, he 'tried to reinstate the Romantic image of the writer as inseparable from the work.'[78] This explains the lack of conspicuous attention to the processes of David's 'art;' it is expressed as being innate and bound up with David's very personality – complemented by the autobiographical nature of the novel. The ancestry of the novelist-character this thesis examines is found in the Confessional and Bildungs/Künstlerroman tradition, inherent in which is the notion of self-development; the protagonist, by means of education and experience, forges a composite identity.

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[77] Beebe, p.93.
[78] Pettitt, p.158.

Like the characteristically autobiographical Bildungsroman, the Künstlerroman 'proceeds by disowning personal experience, and…universalising it'[79] – its inherently autobiographical nature is demonstrated by Beebe, who asserts that 'the story of a sensitive young man is usually that of a potential artist; when the novel is autobiographical, as most are, it is the story of the artist who wrote the book.'[80] Experience is seen by these writers as necessary to produce art but it is not simply a means to achieving the finished work. The novel then becomes the story of that experience, the procedure of rendering it into art is a necessary bi-product that often finds a place in the narrative. In this way 'art thus turns into the one and only reality as transient (and mundane) 'experience' is transmuted into the everliving portrait of the artist.'[81] Seret recognises that when 'the author of the Künstlerroman is narrating the development of his hero who is also an artist, the line differentiating author from his hero of often tenuous.'[82] The process of writing the Künstlerroman is seen as instrumental in shaping the author; not only does the creative act assist in realising artistic ambitions, it also forces the writer to journey into his own consciousness, reliving the past and using it not only to create but also to construct a new self:

> Because of the use of an artist-protagonist and the importance of autobiographical data as background for plot progression, the inexperienced writer must pass through a process of introspection and self-analysis while he is formulating ideas…the act of writing his Künstlerroman forces the young artist to voyage into the mysterious and unexplained region of his unconscious in order to define his own self.[83]

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[79] Michael Minden, *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.5.
[80] Beebe, p.4.
[81] David Williams, *Confessional Fictions: a Portrait of the Artist in the Canadian Novel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 6.
[82] Seret, p.5.
[83] Ibid, p.91.

Only rarely is the truly artistic soul accepted in society and David Copperfield is one such example. Following the traditions of the Bildungsroman the hero, David, after the customary struggle to find his place in society, does so, and settles into a blissful family life. However, unlike the nuances of the Künstlerroman, his struggle has little to do with his art and everything to do with his family and upbringing. The beginning of his career as a popular author is almost a throw-away point – something he seems to attain with almost laughable ease – despite what he calls 'fear and trembling'. This aside does not even appear until more than two thirds of the way through the novel and then takes up little more than a paragraph:

> I have taken with fear and trembling to authorship. I wrote a little something, in secret, and sent it to a magazine, and it was published in the magazine. Since then, I have taken heart to write a good many trifling pieces. Now, I am regularly paid for them.[84]

Apart from his self-appointed 'task' – the recording of his own story – David has hitherto shown little interest, let alone a preoccupation with this new so-called art. This is markedly different from the majority of other Künstlerroman protagonists, especially those like Stephen Dedalus and Paul Morel in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), who from an early age show a great aptitude for and fixation on art of one form or another, even if other endeavours eventually overshadow them. Dickens is one of the few authors who permits his central character to enjoy anything like the levels of success he himself enjoyed. In the novel's concluding chapter David writes simply: 'I had advanced in fame and fortune, my domestic joy was perfect.'[85]

[84] Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (London: Penguin, 2004), p.633.
[85] Ibid, p.871.

David is the earliest, and also perhaps the most overtly, quantifiably 'successful' of any of the writer-characters looked at during the course of this thesis. Even the novels that in some way are seen to affirm the artistic vocation do not usually 'allow' the protagonist such triumph. The only novels that really come close to this are Kellman's self-begetting novels: the implication being that the writer-character must be successful as we have just finished reading their completed novel. Like Dickens, George Gissing specifically depicts the novelist-character in his 1891 novel *New Grub Street*. In Gissing's novel the multiple writing characters include poets, as well as novelists and journalists. These last two professions are shown to have much in common – a symptom of the emerging professionalisation of the writer, as well as a shared dependence on the everyday for material. *New Grub Street* deals with the lives of literary men but they are far removed from the glory of the artist-figure. Only the hack journalist Jasper Milvain succeeds in his profession because he refuses to think of writing in the same romanticised way as his friends do:

> I tell you, writing is a business…There's no question of the divine afflatus; that belongs to another sphere of life. We talk of literature as a trade, not of Homer, Dante and Shakespeare.[86]

Edwin Reardon – the novelist-character who 'likes to be called an "artist"'[87] – unlike Milvain, refuses to compromise his work, even in order to make money when he and his family are destitute. Bernard Bergonzi writes that Gissing himself was dominated by 'the myth of the artist who must subject himself to intense suffering if he is to produce work of any value.'[88] For Gissing the experience of suffering generates and justifies the work of art. Gissing's novel, like Dickens's, is semi-autobiographical and he uses his experiences as a struggling writer, as well as his belief in the myth of the artist, in the romanticised character of Reardon,

[86] George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (London: Penguin, 1985), p.43.
[87] Ibid, p.37.
[88] Bernard Bergonzi, 'Introduction' *New Grub Street*, p.12.

who dies in order that his artistic sensibilities remain uncompromised.[89] Jerome Buckley observes that:

> Gissing excelled neither in direct self-revelation nor in the invention of a fictional world beyond his immediate experience. In *New Grub Street*… he found a middle course, a way of satisfying his personal need for confession and at the same time placing it several removes from the literal fact and so shielding himself both from undue self-pity and from public misjudgement.[90]

The struggle Gissing faced was also necessary to gain the relevant experience from which to write. For Milvain, Reardon's counterpart, literature is business, a trade rather than the art of the great men he names, and is thus divorced from the notion of a personal relationship between the art and artist. He is, however, a journalist and united with the novelist under the more general terms 'writer' and 'author' as opposed to 'artist' or 'poet.' Reardon is rendered incapable of producing anything that he feels compromises his artistic nature, something his family interpret as laziness – his brother-in-law implies that writing is easy, saying:

> 'Confound the fellow! Why the deuce doesn't he go on with his novel-writing? There's plenty of money to be made out of novels.'
>
> 'But he can't write, Jack. He's lost his talent.'
>
> 'That's all bosh, Amy. If a fellow has once got into the swing of it he can keep it up if he likes. He might write his two novels easily enough, just like

[89] However we can surely read in Reardon's refusal to compromise his artistic principles – which finally results in his death – Gissing's judgement on what, ultimately, these notions of artistic sensibility are really worth.
[90] Jerome Buckley, *The Turning Key: Autobiography and the Subjective Impulse since 1800* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp.118-19.

> twenty other men and women. Look here, I could do it myself if I weren't too lazy. And that's the matter with Reardon. He doesn't care to work.'
>
> 'I have thought that myself,' observed Mrs Yule. 'It really is too ridiculous to say that he couldn't write some kind of novels if he chose. Look at Miss Blunt's last book; why *anybody* could have written that. I'm sure there isn't a thing in it I couldn't have imagined myself.'[91]

This conversation represents a prevalent theme for the novelist-character in terms of society's reaction to the work they do. These comments fail to take into account the principles which Reardon, amongst others, sees as necessary to creating great art. However they raise a valid point about the status of the novel: it is viewed as a money-making venture by Jack Yule, and by both he and Mrs. Yule as something that simply anyone might write, rather than the great art-form Reardon seems to hold it as. In fact, his behaviour indicates that although he sees himself as an artist he does not view his writing as art; he tells his wife he will take a clerk's job to 'relieve me from the necessity of perpetually writing novels.'[92] From this we may infer that he views novel writing as limiting, and as a chore; something he does for money. It seems his chosen form does not match up to his artistic expectations and he fails to see the sense in what Milvain tells him about literature as business. Reardon ultimately fails in art, as in life, because he refuses to recognise his true position as a writer, instead choosing to labour under the misapprehension of artistic genius.

Milvain, by contrast is not only hard-working and driven to succeed, uncompromising in his actions towards his friends and family, but supremely conscious of the very unromantic nature of the writing life. The success Gissing himself enjoyed at the end of his short life suggests that he, like Milvain, faced up to the practicalities of authorship, although his penul-

[91] Gissing, p.276.
[92] Ibid, p.259.

timate novel *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* published in 1903, the year of Gissing's death, reflects his ultimate disillusionment with it:

> They took to writing because they knew not what else to do, or because the literary calling tempted them by its independence and its dazzling prizes. They will hang on to the squalid profession, their earnings eked out by begging and borrowing, until it is too late for them to do anything else – and then? With a lifetime of dread experience behind me, I say that he who encourages any young man or woman to look for his living to "literature," commits no less than a crime.[93]

Gissing's resentful attitude towards the literary establishment and literary lifestyle, the 'squalid profession' as he calls it, can be explained by the manner in which this life did not accord with the myth of the artist. Rather than being one of elevated position he has found it lowly, degrading, and even dirty.

In *The Author* (2005) Andrew Bennett traces the complex social and critical history of authorship, from classical and medieval conceptions of authorship to the theories of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. However, for Bennett, it is the Romantic model of the author which underpins much of the contemporary understanding of this figure: 'the Romantic theory of authorship, in which the author is designated as autonomous, original and expressive, may be said to account for everything that is commonly or conventionally taken to be implied by talk of 'the author.''[94] Beebe classifies the two idealised 'types of romantic artist-heroes: one is the Chatterton image, the sensitive plant too delicate to feel at ease in a material world; the other is Byronic, the guilt-curses rebel whose intensity of purpose and appetite for passionate experience alienate him from a society that prefers mildness to intensity and the usual

[93] George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Middlesex: Echo Library, 2007), p. 20.
[94] Bennett, p.56.

to the unique.'[95] These characterisations align with Beebe's dual aspects of art – the ivory tower and the sacred fount, discussed previously. For Beebe, Byron was the exemplar of his kind of poet, whereas what he terms the 'Chatterton image' is more widely applicable, although it is often found to relate to Shelley. Inhabiting either of these stereotypes involved a conscious act of self-creation, and according to Marlon Ross, the 'Romantic poets are driven to a quest for self-creation and self-comprehension that is unprecedented in literary history.'[96] This is embodied in the opening pages of George Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886) when the young narrator first discovers Shelley in a book that falls open 'at the "Sensitive Plant"…henceforth the little volume never left my side'.[97] In her introduction to *Marketing the Author* (2004) Marysa Demoor writes that by the late 1800s 'the practice of self-mythologising was far from being an isolated phenomenon at the time… it was fashionable to create and perform a well-designed writerly identity.'[98]

One of the essays taken from this collection, Annette Federico's 'Irony, Ethics and Self-fashioning in George Moore's 'Confessions of a Young Man,'' finds a very conscious authorial self-construction at work. For Federico Moore's memoir *Confessions of a Young Man* 'dramatises the process of self-fashioning in a way no other book of the period did…it is a self-reflexive performance.'[99] *Confessions* was actually the seventh book written by Moore but in it he returned to the years of his adolescence, spent in Paris and London as a struggling artist. It closely adheres to the confessional and Bildungs/Künstlerroman tradition in that it follows the protagonist through a journey of self-creation, by means of artistic experience and education, concluding in the self becoming a composite of what he has learnt and experi-

[95] Beebe, p.66.
[96] Marlon Ross, *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.22.
[97] George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man* (London: Penguin, 1939), p.20.
[98] Maryssa Demoor, 'Introduction,' in ed., Marysa Demoor, *Marketing the Author: Authorial Personae, Narrative Selves and Self-fashioning 1880-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.15.
[99] Ibid, p.100.

enced. The process of self-creation, the focus of Elizabeth Grubgeld's *George Moore and the Autogenous Self* (1994), is evident from the opening lines of narrative:

> My soul, so far as I understand it, has very kindly taken colour and form from the many various modes of life that self-will and an impetuous temperament have forced me to indulge in. Therefore I may say that I am free from original qualities, defects, tastes, etc. What is mine I have acquired…I came into the world apparently with a nature like a smooth sheet of wax, bearing no impress, but capable of being moulded into all shapes.[100]

The following passage goes on to describe how, during a coach journey, the narrator overhears his parents 'talking of a novel the world is reading. Did Lady Audley murder her husband?' and how this discussion made 'such thoughts flash through the boy's mind; his imagination is stirred and quickened, and he begs for an explanation.'[101] This is indicative of a fascination with literature that drives him into the library where he discovers the little book of Shelley, which 'was finally assimilated and became part of my being.'[102] The influence of his reading upon his self-development is referred to constantly, at one point declaring (about books): 'I am what they made me.'[103] In this self, constructed through the absorption of literature, Moore 'posits "life" and "art" as oppositional categories and then proceeds to interfuse the two terms,'[104] making the self he has created an art form in itself.

Following a period in Paris as an art student, and London as a journalist, Moore begins to write his novel. Interestingly a scene dramatised as dialogue between the narrator and his

[100] Moore, p.19.
[101] Ibid, p.20.
[102] Ibid, p.81.
[103] Ibid, p.63.
[104] Elizabeth Grubgeld, *George Moore and the Autogenous Self* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), p.40.

"Conscience," predates his declaration to the reader 'I will write my confessions!'[105] In the earlier revelations "Conscience" tells him:

> You have failed in all you have attempted, and the figure you have raised out of your father's tomb is merely a sensitive and sensuous art-cultured being…You are now writing a novel. The hero is a wretched creature, something like yourself.[106]

That "Conscience" gives us this information before the narrator actually voices his intention pre-empts the unconscious nature of the narrative. As a self-constructed being the character is close to being a fictional construct, as in Federico's assertion that 'Moore's form of self-fashioning involved a steady dedication to the creation of an inner life that would be true to an ideal of outward self-presentation, an ideal 'George Moore','[107] so that the 'George Moore' we see as a creation is like an actor playing a role, the role of the author, whilst the direction comes from the inner-self. So when "Conscience" speaks it is like the inner voice and the utterances turn into directions, as in this case 'you are now writing a novel' becomes 'I will write my confessions!'

Critics largely agree that *Confessions* reads more like a novel than a memoir, and we are led to assume that the novel the narrator is writing is the same as the one we are reading. Originally the narrator was given the name Edwin Dayne, but writes Grubgeld, 'after 1889, the protagonist's name was changed from "Edwin Dayne" to that of its author, in accordance with what Moore says was his original intention to identify himself with his character…he offered this character as a representation of himself.'[108] The character George Moore is, like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, a representation of a younger self, something like the author re-

[105] Moore, p.196.
[106] Ibid, p.191.
[107] Demoor, p.100.
[108] Ibid, p.37.

members himself being but with the ironic detachment of an older, wiser self. When making the decision to become an artist the narrator writes of his self as 'not the self that was then mine, but the self on whose creation I was enthusiastically determined.'[109] The death of the narrator's father is seen as key in the process of self-creation, Moore writes:

> My father's death freed me…his death gave me power to create myself – that is to say, to create a complete and absolute self out of the partial self which was all that the restraint of home had permitted; this future self, this ideal George Moore, beckoned me, lured me like a ghost.[110]

The freedom Moore feels following his father's death is analogous to that which Stephen seeks through his self-enforced exile; both remove certain restraints, allowing the process of self-actualisation to begin. Moore and Joyce are two examples of novelists who have created themselves through their fiction, thus their creative personas are inextricably bound up with their texts.

The inherently autobiographical nature of the Künstlerroman and its late-nineteenth/early twentieth-century descendants reflects the relationship between everyday life and the novel, in which we find that both the self and the text are constructed versions of reality. The novelist-characters of Dickens, Gissing, and Moore all (to a greater or lesser extent) appear to adhere to a decidedly Romantic conception of the writer as inseparable from the work, especially Moore's protagonist, whose self-fashioning is inextricably tied to his writing. This relationship between life and writing, although not exclusive to the novel, is manifested in representations or impressions of the novelist as working in close proximity to the 'real' world, taking 'the whole of boredom'[111] – the ordinary and everyday – as subject matter. The novelist is therefore conceived of as a different type of creator, seen as a storyteller or craftsman,

[109] Moore, p.25.
[110] Ibid, p.24.
[111] 'The Novelist,' line 10.

rather than artist. Critics have identified this division in the representation of the creative artist, for instance Beebe's ivory tower and sacred fount, or Lemon's Byronic and Wordsworthian figures. The Byronic figure maintains a position in which 'both the message and the messenger are sacred,'[112] whilst the Wordsworthian is 'primarily an ordinary human being.'[113] The novelist typically emulates this latter, more ordinary archetype, reinforcing the idea of the novel form as being anchored in a recognisable 'world we all share.'[114] Novels which feature the novelist as a central character comment on this perceived relationship between the novel and everyday experience. The novelist-character is used to question the status and purpose of the novel whilst reinforcing the preoccupation of the novelist with the act of writing and the relationship between life and text, as well as between text and author – something which critical theory challenges. The following section explores a range of twentieth-century authorship theories, beginning with Barthes's 'Death of the Author,' New Criticism, Foucault's 'What Is An Author?' and Wayne C. Booth's 'implied author.' These theories are considered alongside the notion of the authorial or writing voice and further novelist-characters in Joyce, Jorge L. Borges and Samuel Beckett.

[112] Lemon, p.xi.
[113] Ibid, p.xiii.
[114] Cronin, p.259.

III. PAPER AUTHORS

> At the creative level there is in any case no connection whatever between the author and text. They are two entirely separate things. Nothing, but nothing, is to be inferred or deduced from one to the other, and in either direction. The deconstructivists have proved that beyond a shadow of a doubt. The author's role is purely fortuitous and agential. He has no more significant a status than the bookshop assistant or the librarian who hands the text qua object to the reader…most of them are still under the positively medieval illusion that they write their own books…I have about as much to say as an automatic typewriter. God, when I think of the endless pages the French have spent on trying to decide whether the writer himself is written or not.[115]

In contrast to the Romantic conceit of the author as inseparable from the text, modern theorists, like Barthes, attempt to divorce the life, and even the author, from the work. Miles Green, the novelist-character in John Fowles' *Mantissa*, humorously puts the reader straight on this relationship, with an assertion Barthes would indeed be proud of! Fowles' novel details the interactions between the author, Miles, and his Muse. As a satirical reflection of this relationship and the complexity of the creative process, the author and the muse vie for power and authority over the novel; both are represented as examples of outdated modes of thinking about authorship. Bennett asserts that, in twentieth-century criticism, Barthes and Michel Foucault 'laid the foundations for later literary-critical and theoretical thinking about au-

[115] John Fowles, *Mantissa* (London: Picador, 1988), pp.118-126.

thors.'[116] Of the two it is Barthes's that is the best known but arguably also the most commonly misconstrued: although his short 1967 essay 'The Death of the Author' calls for a removal of the author from the text, allowing unconstrained critical interpretations, further readings of Barthes's works demonstrate an inconsistency in his feelings on this subject, suggesting that it is actually only a particular aspect of authorship which Barthes wishes to remove. 'As institution the author is dead: his person…has disappeared…but in the text, in a certain way, I *desire* the author'[117] writes Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text* only six years later. It was a question Barthes returned to again and again, as Jane Gallop finds in *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time* (2011), in which she demonstrates the ambiguity of Barthes's treatment of the author through a close reading of his texts. Key to Gallop's argument is Barthes's subsequent professed desire for the author, as expressed in *The Pleasure of the Text*. Barthes's apparent ambivalence can be partially explained by the two-fold function he seems to see the author as inhabiting, and Gallop points to his use of capitalisation to differentiate between these two roles. She remarks that:

> While the "Author-God" appears but once in "The Death of the Author," as the essay progresses it increasingly uses a capitalized "Author" rather than the lower-case "author" with which it begins (ending, as we know, "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author"). I read this capitalized "Author" as a version of the doubly capitalized "Author-God."[118]

It is this capitalised author that Barthes wishes to discredit in 'The Death of the Author,' and in his later works including *The Pleasure of the Text*, along with his studies on individual au-

[116] Bennett, p.28.
[117] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p.27.
[118] Jane Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), p.34.

thors, such as *S/Z: an essay*[119] (1970) and *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (1971). Only four years after he has denounced the need for any author at all, he speaks of the return of the author (lower-case) in the latter text:

> The author who returns is certainly not the one who has been identified by our institutions…The author who leaves his text and goes into our life has no unity: he is mere plural of 'charms,' the site of a few tenuous details, yet a source of vivid novelistic glimmerings.[120]

Barthes, here, explicitly divorces this returning author from what he sees as the institutions – academic criticism, universities, and the literary canon. Here is an author we observe through and in the text, rather than one through whom the text can be interpreted – the so-called Author-God. It is this 'Author-God' Barthes objects to, not the author whom he sees as 'lost in the middle of the text (not *behind* it, like a *deus ex machina*).'[121] This statement may well be seen as a riposte to Flaubert's famous contention regarding authorial impersonality, that 'an author in his book must be like God in the universe, present everywhere and visible nowhere,'[122] which is 'borrowed' by Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait*. Barthes – in opposition to Flaubert's notion that the author must be invisible within the text, and Stephen's that he should be 'behind or beyond or above' – sees the author instead 'lost' in the midst of the work. This is a far less powerful position than that which either Flaubert or Joyce hold the author/artist as occupying; Barthes would later develop this theory into what he terms a 'paper-author.'[123]

Despite the prevalence of 'Death of the Author' theory, David Lodge is right in asserting that 'the way in which fiction is produced and circulated and received in our culture today is

[119] On Honoré de Balzac's 1830 novella *Sarrasine.*
[120] Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p.8.
[121] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 27.
[122] Gustave Flaubert, *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert 1830-1857*, trans Francis Steegmuller (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979), p.173.
[123] See further discussion, p.58.

totally at odds with the assertions of Barthes…the reception of new writing has in fact probably never been more obsessively author-centred than it is today.'[124] The author's name continues to be used as a method of classification, in accordance with Foucault's author-function, especially outside of the academic institutions and criticism. Public consumption of texts is dependent on authorship – bookshop and library shelves typically continue to be arranged by author; changes in mass media mean that the public are ever more familiar with popular writers – they have websites and social media accounts, they write blogs, they communicate with their readers via podcasts, television, and book signings, as well as national and international festivals and book tours. In his introduction to *The Making of the Victorian Novelist* (2003) Bradley Deane finds that 'in the early twentieth-century literary marketplace, authorial cults of personality continue to drive production and consumption: we continue to encounter that old authorship in the photography on dust jackets, in online chatrooms and innumerable fan sites, in the unremitting stream of promotional book tours.'[125]

Barthes along with Foucault, Paul de Man, William Gass, and Jacques Derrida, amongst others, may have radically altered the ways in which authors and authorship are perceived within academia and criticism. However, in practice these seminal theories do nothing to alter the author-centric way in which literature continues to be classified, both academically and socially. D. J. Taylor attacks theories such as 'Death of the Author,' declaring: 'surely we all *know* that, whatever the theorists might tell us about literature ultimately reducing itself to the mechanics of language, books are not simply matrixes of words but the product of a particular mind writing at a particular time.'[126] Whilst we would no longer accept a biographical reading of a text to be exhaustive, the author still retains a position within criticism and Romantic notions surrounding authorship and artistic creation do linger. Bennett makes an important dis-

[124] David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.15
[125] Bradley Deane, *The Making of the Victorian Novelist* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.ix.
[126] D. J. Taylor, *After the War: The Novel and England Since 1945* (London: Flamingo, 1994), p.xvii.

tinction between the real, historical person and 'universal' figure, which is fundamental to this study:

> The author as framed and conceived within the institution of literature: the author is both him – or herself – individual, unique, a one-off and at the same time, as author, more than this, a general or 'universal' figure, a figure that goes beyond its own genesis, its own origins in and as a particular, unique individual.[127]

Despite an apparent move away from the figure of the author, it appears to endure both within critical theory as well as in popular culture. The durability of the novelist-character can be linked with its diversity: as subsequent chapters show, the variety of roles and functions the novelist-character has been tasked to perform, have ensured the character's perennial appearances. The conflicting treatment of the figures of the novelist, writer, and author – through Romantic, Victorian, and both modern and postmodern twentieth-century critical thought – has also guaranteed that the character remains a pertinent subject for fictional exploration. Mary Eagleton goes so far as to directly equate the late twentieth-century profusion of authorial characters with the dissemination of Barthes's essay:

> Not surprisingly, the creative writer has been keen to keep the author alive…if anything creative writers have been stimulated by the 'death of the Author' thesis rather than stifled, delighted rather than defensive, and the 1980s revealed a particular flowering of texts with author-protagonists as Barthes's argument became better known and part of wider metafictional interests. Generally, authors wanted to reaffirm a role – definitely more living than dead – and there was a particular disquiet about the author's ethical re-

[127] Bennett, p.126.

> sponsibility…but the idea of the author as a questionable figure, not identifiable with the person who writes, possibly mendacious and close relative of Jekyll and Hyde came as no news to the creative writer.[128]

Whilst the Künstlerroman tradition has been seen to make use of the artist-character as a metaphor for the conscious construction of a new self through which to write, after modernism this authorial self seems to take on its own autonomy, sometimes to the distress of the writer. Jorge Luis Borges describes this process in 'Borges and I':

> The other one, the one called Borges, is the one things happen to. I walk through the streets of Buenos Aires…I know of Borges from the mail and see his name on a list of professors or in a biographical dictionary. I like hourglasses, maps, eighteenth-century typography, the taste of coffee and the prose of Stevenson; he shares these preferences, but in a vain way that turns them into the attributes of an actor. It would be an exaggeration to say that ours is a hostile relationship; I live, let myself go on living, so that Borges may contrive his literature, and this literature justifies me. It is no effort for me to confess that he has achieved some valid pages, but those pages cannot save me, perhaps because what is good belongs to no one, not even to him, but rather to the language and to tradition. Besides, I am destined to perish, definitively, and only some instant of myself can survive in him…I shall remain in Borges, not in myself (if it is true that I am someone), but I recognize myself less in his books…
>
> I do not know which of us has written this page.[129]

[128] Mary Eagleton, *Figuring the Woman Author in Contemporary Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.4.
[129] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Borges and I,' in *Labyrinths* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp.282-83.

Written in 1957, Borges's short story is an expression of a problematic split between the historical person and the writing (or authorial) voice. The "I" of the passage is representative of the voice of what has been described variously as the biographical, historical, or 'real' author. The "Borges" of the text is seen as an interloper, an almost alien construct that develops through writing to the point that it becomes a separate entity, which has only a vague, affected ('vain') similarity to the biographical author. The statement 'I recognize myself less in his books' suggests that as a writer develops and matures in his art and the writing side takes over, a point will come where the text becomes the almost unconscious construction: as Bennett writes, for the Romantics 'a defining element in the notion of genius is a certain evacuation of selfhood, the genius's own ignorance or inability or ineffectuality – what John Keats memorably names 'negative capability.''[130] In 'Borges and I' this concept of unconscious composition is taken up by "I" who implies that "Borges" cancels him out. In pointing to the writings as belonging 'rather to language and to tradition,' the text is self-contained and responsibility for the text is handed to the reader, consolidator of tradition. Like the figure of the oral storyteller, the stories belong not to that one individual who tells them but to the wider tradition of storytelling and to those who listen. It is the reader who conceives of "Borges," he 'is created by the interaction between the reader and "what 'Borges' has written," which means that "Borges" is a fiction created by his own fictions.'[131]

The final line – 'I do not know which of us has written this page' – is a paradox. That the "I" of the text has committed his concerns about "Borges" to the page automatically turns them into something written, and "Borges" does the writing. The very act of writing down turns "I" into "Borges" as the writing voice takes over – the reference made to Stevenson hints at the Jekyll and Hyde-like Doppelgänger nature exhibited by the split in the authorial self. Paul de Man's essay on Borges, 'A Modern Master,' uses the same image of the author

[130] Bennett, p.64.
[131] Bruce Kawin, *The Mind of the Novel: Reflexive Fiction and the Ineffable* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p.326n.

as a mirror as his 1983 *Blindness and Insight*, when he says 'the writer engenders another self that is his mirror-like reversal…this act by which a man loses himself into the image he has created, is to Borges inseparable from poetic greatness.'[132] In the earlier work de Man used the idea of the mirror to illustrate how fiction is a reflection of reality; here in relation to Borges's text he argues that in the creation of the writing voice, the "Borges" of the story, the real Borges – the "I" – must accept the loss of his personal identity in order to become a writer.

In 'Borges and I,' the real-name – Borges – is given to the writing voice, not the biographical person to whom, in reality, it belongs. This is a reverse of what Paul Auster finds. Contrary to Borges' "I" who gives up his name to the writer he refers to as "Borges," for Auster all the writer is left with is his name, which appears on the jacket of a book he doesn't feel he wrote:

> You see Leo Tolstoy's name on the cover of *War and Peace*, but once you open the book Leo Tolstoy disappears. It's as if no one has really written the words you're reading. I find this 'no-one' terribly fascinating… on the one hand it's an illusion: on the other hand it has everything to do with how stories are written. For the author of a novel can never be sure where any of it comes from. The self that exists in the world – the self whose name appears on the covers of books – is finally not the same self who writes the book.[133]

Auster relates to the notion of an unconscious construction of the text, stating that an author 'can never be sure where any of it comes from.' It is in this statement that Auster reveals how it is he can say that for the reader of *War and Peace* Tolstoy disappears, becoming just a name on the book cover: whilst absorbed in the novel, the reader finds the writer irrelevant; it is the critic, academic, or biographer who draw meaning from the author's relation to his/her

[132] Paul de Man, 'A Modern Master,' in ed., Harold Bloom, *Jorge Luis Borges* (New Haven: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), pp.23-24.
[133] Paul Auster, *The Red Notebook* (London: Faber, 1995), p.137.

text. Similarly Borges feels detached from his text, but also from the now famous name that appears alongside the work. In her essay 'Anon,' Woolf follows the evolution of the relationship between writer and audience, finding that the medieval bard or singer 'had his audience, but the audience was so little interested in his name that he never gave it.'[134] The relevance and importance of the author's name changed with the advent of the printing press – something which Woolf declares was 'finally to kill Anon. But it was the press also that preserved him.'[135]

In 'What Is an Author?' his 1969 rejoinder to Barthes's 'The Death of the Author,' Foucault also comments upon the previous unimportance of the author's name for a 'literary' text, stating that texts:

> Were accepted, put into circulation, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author…On the other hand, those texts that we now would call scientific…[were] accepted as "true," only when marked with the name of the author... A reversal occurred in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Scientific discourses began to be received for themselves, in the anonymity of an established or always redemonstrable truth…the author function faded away, and the inventor's name served only to christen a theorem, proposition, particular effect, property, body, group of elements, or pathological syndrome. By the same token, literary discourses came to be accepted only when endowed with the author function. We now ask of each poetic or fictional text: From where

[134] Virginia Woolf, 'Anon,' in Brenda R. Silver, '"Anon" and "The Reader": Virginia Woolf's Last Essays,' *Twentieth-Century Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 3/4 Virginia Woolf Issue (Autumn – Winter, 1979), p.382.
[135] Ibid, p.384.

> does it come, who wrote it, when, under what circumstances, or beginning with what design?'[136]

Although Foucault never explicitly references Barthes's essay, the later work is 'nevertheless heavily indebted, pervasively and agonistically influenced by that precursor text.'[137] Contrary to 'The Death of the Author' – often seen as a "call to arms" – Foucault's essay is less antagonistic and more discursive, making a vital contribution to author theory in its figuring of the 'author function.' For Foucault the author is a consequence of discourse, and his essay inquires as to whether certain texts require the presence of an author, or whether the author is assigned to a text in order to restrict the 'cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significances.'[138] The advancement of the legal system, in terms of copyright laws, the growth of the printing press, and emerging individualisation are all seen by Foucault as key events in the evolution of the author function: reasons for the change he observes as occurring in the seventeenth/eighteenth-century.

The author's name is taken as a key characteristic of the author function; Foucault states 'the author's name, unlike other proper names, does not pass from the interior of a discourse to the real and exterior individual who produced it,'[139] which is more in keeping with Borges's view in which the name is associated with the text and not the historical author, whilst Auster asserts that the key to how stories are written does not lie with the (named) historical author, but rather with the 'no-one' through whom the story is told. Leo Tolstoy's name is again used as an example by Wolf Schmid when he expresses that 'the concrete author, the real historical figure, the creator of the work is not a part of the work, but exists independent-

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[136] Michel Foucault,'What is an Author,' in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed., Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991), p.109.
[137] Bennett, p.20.
[138] Foucault, p.118.
[139] Ibid, p.107.

ly. Leo Tolstoy would have existed even if he never put pen to paper.'[140] Schmid's book *Narratology* (2010) is one of the most recent discussions of what he calls 'the concrete author' and his opposite 'the abstract author.' Schmid's abstract author is the latest incarnation[141] of what Wayne C. Booth terms the 'implied author,' in his 1961 *The Rhetoric of Fiction*:

> The implied author (the author's 'second self'). – Even the novel in which no narrator is dramatized creates an implicit picture of an author who stands behind the scene, whether as stage manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails. This implied author is always distinct from the 'real man' – whatever we may take him to be – who creates a superior version of himself, a 'second self', as he creates his work.[142]

Booth's implied author is undoubtedly what has been identified by authors – Auster's 'no-one' and the "Borges" of 'Borges and I' – as the writing or authorial voice. Arguably, this implied author is also a version of what Bennett identifies as the Romantic poets' notion of 'negative capability.'[143] The implied author is represented as unintentional, almost as a natural by-product of the text: as Booth writes, 'the "implied author" chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man.'[144] Significantly Booth marks the implied author as both 'superior' and 'ideal' version of the real – that is biographical or historical – writer. Booth's reasons for granting supremacy to the implied author seem to stem from his notion that this implied author negates 'pointless and unverifiable talk about such qualities as "sincerity" or "seriousness,"' in regard to the

[140] Wolf Schmid, *Narratology: An Introduction* (Berlin: Walter de Greyter, 2010), p.36.
[141] See Bennett's 'Appendix: An Author Lexicon,' pp.128-30.
[142] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p.151.
[143] Bennett, p.64.
[144] Booth, pp.74-75.

biographical author.[145] Pointing to Ford Madox Ford's condemnation of Fielding, Defoe, and Thackeray, on the grounds that Ford found their writing insincere, believing it to manifest aspirations he knew 'were in no way any aspirations of theirs,'[146] Booth argues that the implied author negates this kind of objection to any incompatibility between text and author. Booth counters Ford's argument by finding that, in a great work, the text 'establishes the "sincerity" of its implied author, regardless of how grossly the man who created that author may belie in his *other* forms of conduct the values embodied in his work.'[147] Fundamentally for Booth, the implied author exists only within a particular text, cancelling out antagonistic attitudes which may be exhibited in other texts by the same writer. This position does not totally refute the real author: it allows different texts (and textual representations of the author and his/her opinions) to coexist without necessarily invalidating each other, by arguing that they can be viewed independently and therefore need not be seen in conflict with each other.

Predating the seminal twentieth-century authorship theories of Barthes and Foucault, the concept of the implied author has been reworked more recently by theorists such as Schmid, Alexander Nehamas, Umberto Eco and Gregory Currie, since its original inception by Booth. As a member of the Chicago School, which shares a rough time frame with New Criticism, Booth argues for an albeit compromised placing of the author within the ideas of New Criticism. The figure of the author was seen as a constraint placed upon the text by the New Critics who instead focused on close textual reading and the idea of the text as autonomous and self-referential. Prominent in the 1940s and 50s texts such as John Crowe Ransom's 1941 *The New Criticism* (from which the movement takes its name), Robert Penn Warren's *Pure and Impure Poetry* (1943), and *The Intentional Fallacy* (1946) by William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley all argued that the text should stand alone, independent of any historical

[145] Ibid, p.75.
[146] Ford Madox Ford, *The English Novel: From the Earliest Days to the Death of Joseph Conrad* (London: Constable, 1930), p.58.
[147] Booth, p.75.

and cultural context; as well as believing the author's biographical details and intentions to be extraneous. Wimsatt and Beardsley's 'Intentional Fallacy' reasoned that 'the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable.'[148] C. S. Lewis and E. M. W. Tillyard's exchange of essays, published in 1939 as *A Personal Heresy*, anticipates the prominent issues at stake within New Criticism. The essays argued as to whether the representation of the personality of the author was the primary focus of creative writing (especially poetry). Tillyard argued this position, whilst Lewis took the view that instead the focus was not the poet himself but the way he allowed the reader to see, stating 'I look with his eyes, not at him.'[149] As the implied author exists solely within the text it adheres to the notion of an autonomous text, with the implied author as a manifestation of the writer/author as observed by the reader. Booth and later implied author theories have attempted to reconcile the text with its author without detracting from the autonomy of that text. However Foucault, who similarly asserts that 'the author does not precede the works,' nonetheless holds that this author figure may be used to impede 'the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction.'[150] The difference between Foucault and the arguments of New Criticism is that whilst Foucault sees the author function as being invoked by society to impose limitations on the proliferation of potential meanings, New Criticism holds that it is the writer's intention, as well as overriding historical and cultural context(s), which act to constrain the text: a similar view is also taken by Barthes.

Although the idea of the implied author has been widely discussed within narratology since the publication of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Schmid finds that it began much earlier in Russian literary criticism. In fact he cites the work of Viktor Vinogradov, which indicates that as early as 1927 Vinogradov had conceived of what he termed the 'author's image'

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[148] William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy,' in ed., Sean Burke, *Authorship: From Plato to Postmodernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p.90.
[149] E. M. W. Tillyard and C. S. Lewis, *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.11.
[150] Foucault, pp.118-19.

(*obraz avtora*), or 'image of the writer' (*obraz pisatelya*).[151] The following is from a letter, written by Vinogradov and translated by Schmid:

> My thoughts are captivated entirely by the author's image. It shines through any work of art. In the fabric of the words, in the techniques of depiction, we sense its form. This is not the person, the "real," extra-literary Tolstoy, Dostoevsky. It is a specific role-playing form of the author. In every distinctive characteristic, the author's image takes on individual traits, but its structure is nonetheless not determined by the psychological character of the author, but by the author's esthetic-metaphysical attitudes. It is entirely possible for them to remain unconscious, if the author has no particular intellectual and artistic culture, but they must exist.[152]

Vinogradov's figuring of the author image as 'role-playing,' like Booth's 'stage manager' or 'puppeteer,' is suggestive of a performative quality in the representation. However, whilst Booth's vocabulary connotes an element of design and command – a stage *manager*, and puppeteer *controlling* the strings –Vinogradov asserts the author image may (in certain cases) be unconscious. Vinogradov explicitly states that the author image in *not* defined by the author's psychological character but rather by his esthetic-metaphysical attitude: Schmid also quotes from a posthumous work by Vinogradov,[153] in which the author image is described as 'the concentrated embodiment of the work's essence.'[154] Vinogradov finds the author's image as an impression of the author, as observed through the work, whereas Booth's implied author seems, although manifested in a similar way, more intentional: Booth writes that 'he is the

[151] The earliest example of Schmid's 'abstract author.'
[152] Schmid, p.37.
[153] Which has not been translated into English, except by Schmid, but appears to be an essay entitled 'Problema obreza avtora v khudozhestvennoy literature' published in 1971.
[154] Schmid, p.37.

sum of his own choices.'[155] The implied author, although perhaps not something explicitly designed by the writer, relates to the Romantic conception of the authorial voice as 'issuing from somewhere *other* than the self, and as producing not a reduplication of the self but a mask.'[156] It is not an explicit imitation of the author, but an impression left behind of that author and is less conscious than the idea of Bildung where the self may be engineered, tweaked, and improved into an ideal image, a picture of the author.

Unlike the more implicit versions of Booth's implied author, Alexander Nehamas's author construct most closely characterises the notion of a self-developed and designed authorial presence. It also links to Foucault's statement regarding a critical construction of authorship: Foucault argues that 'we do not construct a "philosophical author" as we do a "poet," just as, in the eighteenth century, one did not construct a novelist as we do today.'[157] This relates to seventeenth/eighteenth-century shift Foucault observes in how literary and scientific authorship was figured, as well as to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century literary ideals of the self, constructed through a process of education and experience, as seen in Moore's *Confessions* and Joyce's *A Portrait*. The author construct is a subsequent development of Nehamas's earlier postulated author, of whom he writes:

> Just as the author is not identical with a text's fictional narrator, so he is also distinct from its historical writer. The author is postulated as the agent whose actions account for the text's features; he is a character, a hypothesis which is accepted provisionally, guides interpretation, and is in turn modified in its

[155] Booth, p.75.
[156] Fordham, p.8.
[157] Foucault, p.110.

> light. The author, unlike the writer, is not a text's efficient cause but, so to speak, its formal cause, manifested in thought not identical to it.[158]

In a later essay Nehamas refines his idea of the postulated author into the author construct, which differs slightly from the earlier concept: the author construct, writes Nehamas, is 'to a great extent the product and not the producer of the text, its property and not its owner.'[159] Booth and Nehamas along with a score of other critics including William Gass, William Irwin, Umberto Eco, Jerrold Levinson, and H. L. Hix, have found that aside from the historical, or biographical writer (outside of the text), we also observe the distinct 'author' who is enacted within the text – the authorial "Borges" as opposed to the "I," of the writer. In 'What an Author Is,' (1986), an essay which addresses Foucault's 'What Is an Author?' Nehamas explains the difference he perceives between writer and author:

> Writers are actual individuals, firmly located in history, efficient causes of their texts…Authors are not individuals but characters manifested or exemplified, though not depicted or described, in texts. They are formal causes…postulated to account for a text's features and are produced through an interaction between critic and text.[160]

Nehamas argues that the historical writer creates the text and the author (observed within the work by the reader or critic) creates meaning. The author – whether implied, constructed, postulated, abstracted, fictional, model, or hypothetical – is construed within and generated only by reception of the text. The author is a consequence of the text, 'produced jointly by writer and text…a character who is everything the text shows it to be and who in turn determines

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[158] Alexander Nehamas, 'The Postulated Author: Critical Monism as a Regulative Ideal,' *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.8, No.1 (Autumn, 1981), p.145.
[159] Alexander Nehamas, 'Writer, Text, Work, Author,' in ed., William Irwin, *Death and Resurrection of the Author?* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), p.99.
[160] Alexander Nehamas, 'What an Author Is,' *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.83, No. 11 (November, 1986), p.686.

what the text shows.'[161] At the end of his essay Nehamas concludes that the author is not independent of the work and therefore cannot be seen as an interpretive constraint upon it.

As above, Nehamas terms both his postulated and constructed author 'characters' in several other instances, and yet refuses to conclude that this places him on an equal level with the characters of a novel, admitting however that 'it may now appear that the author cannot readily be distinguished from the very characters of fiction, since fictional characters, too, emerge out of the text in such a manner…the author is therefore…a pure and total product of the peculiar language of fiction.'[162] However, Nehamas reasons that the author construct differs from an actual character or even a dramatised narrator in that 'it is a character manifested or exemplified in a text and not depicted or described in it,' he ends his essay by declaring that 'the author, who is a joint product of writer and text, of critic and interpretation…is not a person but a character.'[163] This statement places the formation of the author construct with the writer and text but, importantly, admits a reliance on the reader to decipher the presence of this author. A reader is thus instrumental in bringing to life this author. Again, although he previously refused to draw the conclusion, Nehamas equates his author construct with a character. Even if we take this as being 'character,' as in character-type, he is still being placed within the level of fiction rather than the 'real' world. There is a distinct ideal of what a writer must be, or rather of what a person must become in order to write. This begins, as discussed previously, with the Romantic tradition, in which 'the Romantic author is always a fiction.'[164]

This notion of the fictionally constructed author is dramatised by novels of the Künstlerroman tradition which present the artist-character as a self-construct, a character who is consciously endeavouring towards an idealised image of 'the artist,' as in Moore's *Confessions* and Joyce's *A Portrait*. The influence of Moore on Joyce is evident, although Stephen's free-

[161] Ibid, p.689.
[162] Nehamas, 'Writer, Text, Work, Author,' pp.99-100.
[163] Ibid, pp.100 & 110.
[164] Bennett, p.71.

dom comes not from the death of his father, as George Moore's does, but from a self-enforced exile from Ireland – his family, his home, his country, his God – at the end of the novel. Like the character of George Moore, Stephen's only substantial artistic output (unless we count the potentially self-begotten nature of both texts) is in his self-creation. In *Ulysses* (1922) Stephen affiliates himself not with Christ but with Eve who, created out of the earth as a companion for Adam, was 'made not begotten.'[165] Joyce's self-creation through his work is a theme many scholars address. Paul Jay for instance remarks that 'in writing out *Portrait* Joyce turns himself into a mature artist by recognising his failings as a younger artist, he 'gives birth to himself''[166] in the character of Stephen. Similarly, Vivian Heller in *Joyce, Decadence and Emancipation* (1995) finds that 'in *Portrait*, Joyce realizes Stephen's dream of autonomy, fathering himself by re-projecting his own artistic gestation.'[167] Heller goes on to conclude that although Stephen creates no art of his own, his 'is the story of the gestation of an artist, not the story of the conception of a work of art.'[168] A comparison between *A Portrait* and the earlier *Stephen Hero* indicates that the early work is a more literally autobiographical account of Joyce's early life, and that in rewriting it as *A Portrait* Joyce in effect also rewrote himself, because, as Jay says, 'by writing about his growth as an artist he might become one.'[169]

One of the most often quoted passages from *A Portrait* is that which begins 'the artist, like the God of creation,'[170] finding itself referenced in many critical works looking at representations of artists. However, it is the previous paragraph that truly illuminates the idea of an implied author:

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[165] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.46.
[166] Paul Jay, *Being in the Text: Self Representation from Wordsworth to Roland Barthes* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p.119.
[167] Vivian Heller, *Joyce, Decadence and Emancipation* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p.54.
[168] Ibid, p.69.
[169] Jay, p.120.
[170] Joyce, p.181.

> The personality of the artist passes into the narration itself, flowing round and round the persons and the action like a vital sea…the personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalizes itself, so to speak.[171]

Although Joyce is discussing the necessary impersonality of the artist (and commenting on Stephen's lack of originality, by having him paraphrase Flaubert), he also inadvertently articulates the notion of the implied author – which Booth, Nehamas, etc., have attempted to capture. Although this excerpt does not capture the voice of the implied author, it sees the author's voice as going from cry, to cadence, to mood, before becoming too refined to hear. This illustrates how, for the writer, the process works – with the initial conception of a work loudly bearing the signs of the writer, before this softens to something quietly implicit. Through writing, the more overt traces of the writer are removed – or as Joyce puts it 're-fined' – eventually becoming impersonal as if they were not written by that writer but by the more universal author-figure who is created in the text. Writing is the catalyst by which that side of the writer's nature is created. If the writerly side of a novelist's nature is created within the text, and by the text, it is easy to see that the novelist-character is an extension of this construction. As we have seen Nehamas stops *just* short of aligning his 'author construct' with the other characters in a novel. Similarly Barthes's paper-author's life is reduced to a fiction:

> It is not that the Author may not 'come back' in the Text, in his text, but he then does so as a 'guest'. If he is a novelist, he is inscribed in the novel like one of his characters… no longer privileged, paternal, aletheological… he

[171] Ibid, pp.180-81.

> becomes, as it were, a paper-author: his life is no longer the origin of his fiction but a fiction contributing to his work.[172]

Barthes reduces the author construct's life to a fiction. To recall Pasternak's belief that the greatest works of art 'are in fact narratives of their own birth,'[173] we may reasonably conclude that these novels are not just the story of the making of a work of art, but of something even more basic and essential: their creators' births, as writers. The novelist-character is a step away from the author construct, who in turn is removed from the actual writer – the novel tells the story of his conception and his disparate selves. Like Pasternak, Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self* (1989) observes 'it is amazing how much art in the twentieth-century has itself for its subject.'[174] Although the origins of such self-reflection may be seen to begin in British fiction in the eighteenth-century, notably *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-67), in the nineteenth-century it comes to underpin the Romantic notion of self-creation. By the early twentieth-century the concept had become entrenched, so much so that Joyce mocks the behaviour of Stephen Dedalus as he adheres to what he believes is the correct writerly etiquette in the almost ritualistic, symbolic setting up of his writing table:

> The next day he sat at his table…before him lay a new pen, a new bottle of ink and a new emerald exercise… On the first line of the page appeared the title of the verses he was trying to write: To E– C–. He knew it was right to begin so for he had seen similar titles in the collected poems of Lord Byron.[175]

Stephen's conception of what a writer should do, and should be, informs his conduct – he is aware of certain conventions and he is consciously playing a role, the role of the artist, much

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[172] Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p.161.
[173] Pasternak, p.241.
[174] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.481.
[175] Joyce, p.58.

in the same manner of Joyce himself, who according to Hugh Kenner 'spent his life playing parts.'[176] Joyce purposefully chose the title 'A Portrait of *the* Artist…' rather than 'A Portrait of *an* Artist' to stress the universal nature of the character-type. Reconciling the author as both an individual, historical agent, and universal figure is something that the novelist-character addresses, as in Bennett's assertion that the author becomes 'a general or 'universal' figure.' This idea of the author as a generalised, abstracted, universal figure is taken to its climax by Beckett in his *Three Novels*, with a succession of shadowy and formless narrators each more shapeless than his predecessor, culminating in the aptly titled *The Unnameable* (1953) where the narrator begs the reader 'ascribe to me a body'[177] before ending in desperate act of self-creation: 'I'll make myself a head, I'll make myself a memory.'[178]

Kellman points to Beckett's decision to abandon Ireland and take up writing in French as evidence 'he was creating a new self'[179] that enabled him to develop as a writer. As well as Kellman's suggestion, Beckett is known to have chosen to write in his second language, French, as it created a freedom of language and identity. When asked (in a 1956 interview) why he chose to write in French he reportedly replied 'parce qu'en francais c'est plus facile d'écrire sans style,'[180] [because in French it's easier to write without style]. This is something he had previously expressed in his first novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (1932) when his protagonist Belacqua says 'only the French language can give you the thing you want.'[181] Like his one-time mentor Joyce, Beckett felt that he had to leave Ireland in order to write. In his biography of Beckett, *Damned to Fame*, James R. Knowlson writes:

> Although Beckett loved the Irish countryside and its ordinary people and his writings are full of Ireland, he had become convinced that he could never

[176] Hugh Kenner, 'Joyce's Anti-Selves,' *Shenandoah*, Vol. 4, No.1 (1953), p.24.
[177] Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p.390.
[178] Ibid, p.411.
[179] Steven G. Kellman, *The Self-Begetting Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p.128.
[180] ed., C.J. Ackerley and S.E. Gontarski, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), p.206.
[181] Samuel Beckett, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (London: Calder, 1993), p.48.

> function properly there as a writer. His cousin explained that "Living in Ireland was a confinement to Sam. He came up against the Irish censorship. He could not swim in the Irish literary scene or in Free State politics the way W.B. Yeats did...but the big city, the larger horizon, offered the freedom of comparative anonymity."[182]

It has been said that Beckett felt the weight of the British and Irish literary tradition too stifling and his move to distance himself from it frees his writing from any particular cultural distinction or association, his landscapes and characters become vague abstractions, like his author characters in *Three Novels*. Ironically, by the very act of intentionally distancing himself from one tradition, he is inadvertently adhering to another tradition which sees the author as distanced and estranged from society; his *Three Novels* capture this by making each of his four narrators 'a caricature of the alienated modern writer.'[183] The very self-conscious nature of his choices as a writer – to leave Ireland, to write in French – mark his authorial persona as being every bit as consciously self-constructed as Joyce's. In a discussion of the dual characters Molloy and Moran in *Molloy*, David Weisberg struggles to reconcile the characters, finding that 'Molloy is presented as a pathologically withdrawn, penniless, vagabond with a grotesque physical appearance, Moran, in contrast, is a church-going Catholic property owner, a slavish follower of bourgeois decorum…that Molly and Moran are counterparts…is complicated by the suggestive undecipherable network of similarities between the two narrator-heroes, as if in text they are, or become the same person.'[184] We may read Molloy and Moran as two sides of the same person, so that Moran's appointed role – that of tracking down Molloy – becomes a quest for self-discovery and understanding. Molloy: alienated, fettered

[182] James R. Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), p.273-74.
[183] David Weisberg, *Chronicles of Disorder: Samuel Beckett and the Cultural Politics of the Modern Novel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p.84
[184] Ibid, p.88.

and shapeless could be conceived of as the ultimate abstract author, or author construct. In this interpretation Moran represents the biographical writer; so that when Moran exclaims:

> Oh the stories I could tell you if I were easy. What a rabble in my head, what a gallery of moribunds. Murphy, Watt, Mercier and all the others.[185]

In displaying an unprecedented awareness of a number of Beckett's other characters, Moran is calling into question the origin of the text and the levels of authorial control. Similarly in *Malone Dies* the narrator again references other Beckett characters, 'the Murphys, Merciers, Molloys, Morans and Malones,' and also speaks with more than a narrator's authority when he tells us 'I cut his throat with a razor'[186] – referring to the butler character from *Murphy*. Beckett is playing a game with the reader, destabilising the notion that the writer can hold sole power over their text in a way that becomes a fixture of postmodern metafiction. In allowing Moran to speak with this level of authorial knowledge Beckett is reducing himself as an author to a textual level. This is illustrated in the essay 'Where Now? Who Now?' by the French writer Maurice Blanchot, which examines a recurring question for Beckett scholars – including Foucault in 'What Is an Author?' – the question of who speaks. In discussing the trilogy Blanchot asks:

> Who is doing the talking here then? We might try to say it was the 'author' if this name did not evoke capacity and control, but in any case the man who writes is already no longer Samuel Beckett but the necessity which has displaced him, dispossessed and dissected him, which has surrendered him to whatever it

[185] Beckett, p.189.
[186] Ibid, p.229.

> outside him, which has made him a nameless being, *The Unnameable*, a being without being, who can neither live nor die.[187]

Blanchot holds that the process of writing decimates the author to such an extent that he is absorbed by the text – as with Joyce's artist passing into the narration and Barthes's paper-author – therefore the author-character can be seen to represent a re-crystallisation of this distilled self. Critics such as Barthes, Vinogradov, Booth, and Nehamas have come extremely close in comparing the implied, constructed, or paper-author with a fictional character: like any of the other characters created by an author, the author construct is created through language and exists only as an impression (inferred by the reader) within the text. This makes the appearance and proliferation of the novelist-character an almost natural conclusion to the critical evolution – from historical-author to author construct to writer-character. If we agree with Bennett, who says that 'the author…is an individual as an empty shell, a hollow man, a man constructed or 'performed' in and by the novel,'[188] then the novelist-character can be read either as an expression of this performance, or as an antidote to the notion of the authorial self as empty through the presentation of an individualised novelist-character. The novelist-character's presence in the text represents yet another enactment of the writer's self, alongside the historical/biographical *writer* and the *author* within the text. In many ways the diffuse nature exhibited by many of the novelist-characters examined in the following chapters of this thesis acts as an expression of or commentary upon the opposing ideas evident in our figuring of an author or writer.

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[187] Maurice Blanchot, 'What Now? Who Now?' in ed., Jennifer Birkett and Kate Ince, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Longman, 2000), p.97.
[188] Bennett, p.120.

IV. CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the major themes and questions which pervade this thesis. In order to confront the function of the novelist-character within the novel this chapter has endeavoured to contextualise some of the prevalent thought on the interrelated but distinct figures of the artist, the author, the writer, and the novelist and how they have been represented by novelists in both fiction and non-fiction writing as well as in literary theory and criticism. In exploring some of the historical notions and representations of the generalised artist-character and of the artist-hero, the specific novelist-character emerges as the most ubiquitous twentieth-century version of this character type. The novelist-character however, unlike that of the artist, is seldom permitted the suffix 'hero,' and is often seen to exhibit characteristics more in-keeping with the anti-hero or everyman archetypes. This demonstrates that the purpose of the novelist-character is more than just as a metafictional device: the pejorative representation of such characters displays an uncertainty inherent in the position of the novelist. Post-WWI portrayals of the novelist-character have tended to show a character that is flawed and fallible, powerless, alienated, and thoroughly de-romanticised – in comparison to the treatment of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century artist-hero.

Equally integral to historical as well as contemporary thinking about the figure of the artist, author, or writer is the mystery inherent in artistic creation or composition. Much of the myth surrounding the process of this creation has fed into the idea of the artistic figure as a special or gifted individual. Although especially significant for the Romantic conception of the poet, the mystery of creation has remained just that – a mystery – meaning that the source of writing is still obscured and therefore continues to be romanticised. This notion of writing

as issuing from somewhere other than writer is evident within the various concepts of the authorial or writing voice – the implied author or author construct – which are manifested through writing and are not seen to exist independently of the text. Arguably, in writing about writing, an attempt to understand and control the mystery of the writing process is being made – or else it becomes a comment upon the unknowability of inspiration and the desire to write. The more human, fallible novelist-character reflects some of the frustration the actual novelist feels in being unable to determine what it is that urges him/her to write. As an expression of a significant part of the mystery of the writer's working life this emphasises the interplay between the novel and reality. Examples taken from the writing of authors, such as Isherwood and Woolf, have revealed that there is held to be a significant difference between the working practice of the novelist and other types of artist. These authors both cite the propensity of the novelist to the raw materials of everyday life – Christopher, 'writing out in the garden, with his shirt off in the sunshine,'[189] and Woolf, who sees the novelist as being 'terribly exposed to life'[190] – aligning the novelist with Beebe's sacred fount as opposed to that of the ivory tower tradition. It is the idiosyncratic relationship that the novelist is seen to share with reality which sets them apart from other kinds of creative artists, making the expression of this dichotomy a fundamental concern of fiction writing.

In remaining distinct from other artists but still distant from the remainder of society the novelist figure comes to occupy the position of true outsider. The novelist-character in turn does not seem to fit in with any one literary movement; although it became especially prevalent in the latter half of the twentieth-century, it is not simply a postmodern phenomenon but is also evident in modernist as well as Romantic, Victorian and even earlier British literature. I have argued that rather than being tied to a particular movement or historical moment the metafictional intention of the novelist-character aligns the character to a tradition of self-

[189] *Christopher and his Kind*, p.179.
[190] Woolf, *Collected Essays Vol. II*, p.131.

reflexive writing, evident in the earliest examples of the novel genre. That is not to say that there has not been an imperative historical impact on the novelist-character in the twentieth-century, especially following WWI, which destabilised the status quo, forcing people to question its validity. The twentieth-century has seen instances of the character propagate as fiction writers have become more self-aware and the inherent metafictional intention of fiction has combined with an uncertainty surrounding the position which both the novel and the novelist may be seen to occupy within society.

A large proportion of the novels featured in this thesis were written in the 1950s-60s: roughly contemporaneous with developing authorship theories such as New Criticism in the 1940s; Booth's implied author from 1961; Barthes's 1967 'Death of the Author' and Foucault's 'What Is an Author?' in 1969. Although some critics, such as Mary Eagleton, have suggested that the novelist-character is in part a reaction to Barthes, et al., the earlier critical movements, as well as the number of novelist-character conceived prior to 'Death of the Author,' suggest instead an ongoing and evolving preoccupation with the position of the author the 1940s on. The relatively few novelist-character novels written pre-1940 – for example Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928), Maugham's *Cakes and Ale* (1930), O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (both 1939) – suggest that this anxiety and ambiguity surrounding authorship existed within the self-reflexive novel long before it became a subject for wider critical debate, although it is worth noting that the Russian critic Vinogradov was formulating his authorship theory in 1927, just before the novelist-character began to appear prominently.

Despite the pessimistic representation of the novelist-character, coupled with critical theory's decimation of the authorial figure, the literary marketplace continues to produce and promote fiction in an almost entirely author-centric fashion. A range of issues surrounding this discrepancy in the treatment of the novelist-character and the author – such as the per-

ceived role(s) of the novelist in society and the relationship between reader, writer, and marketplace – are taken up in the following chapter. Chapter Two begins an exploration of instances of the performance of novelist-characters, looking at their depiction as a reaction to twentieth-century changes to the role and status of the novelist.

CHAPTER II: THE NOVELIST'S FUNCTION(S)
I. INTRODUCTION

> No philosopher and hardly any novelist has ever managed to explain what that weird stuff, human consciousness is made of.[191]

In this quotation Iris Murdoch, herself a distinguished philosopher as well as a novelist, credits the creative writer over the philosopher in terms of the ability to explain human consciousness. Although Murdoch states that 'hardly any novelist' has come close to unlocking this mystery, this still counts as a greater number than 'no philosopher,' indicating the credence that creative art (especially literature) is more closely linked to and can potentially explain more about human consciousness than even philosophy. The vast body of scholarly work dedicated to the place of literature and the writer in society, and on sociological aspects of the novel,[192] goes some way to demonstrating the importance but also the difficulty of confronting this topic. F. R. Leavis notes that:

> If one were enumerating the more obvious kinds of interest that literature has to offer the sociologist, prose fiction, it is plain, would figure very largely. There seems to be a general view that anyone can read a novel; and the

[191] Iris Murdoch, *The Black Prince* (London: Penguin, 2006), p.190.
[192] See especially Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London: Chatto and Windus,1958) and *Writing in Society* (London: Verso, 1983); Andrew Milner, *Literature, Culture and Society* (London: University College London Press, 1996); Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1993); Lucien Goldmann, *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (London: Tavistock, 1977); John Hall, *The Sociology of Literature* (London: Longman, 1979) and Mary F. Rogers, *Novels, Novelists and Readers: Towards a Phenomenological Sociology of Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

> uses commonly made of novels as evidence, sociological or other, would seem to illustrate that view.[193]

Much has been made by Leavis and other critics of the novel's accessibility and applicability to a wide range of readers; Ian Watt, for example, acknowledges the novel's 'impression of fidelity to human experience.'[194] The realist novel performs in a different way to other forms of literature; it is more greatly dependent on the interplay between the text and the society that receives it.

In a similar way to their nineteenth-century counterparts, twentieth-century authors have had to adapt to changes and threats to their position in society; the now ubiquitous media coverage and increased demand for authorial performance of the last twenty years have further commodified the author. This has been reflected in the depiction of the novelist-character, particularly since the 1980s – as new media technology began to boom – with a growing incongruity in how the character is represented. This chapter shows that the position of the novelist is one which is inherently unstable, still subjected to conflicting Romantic and Victorian concepts of authorship. By examining the position and portrayal of the novelist within fiction, this chapter also examines the ways in which female writers and contemporary novelist-characters have destabilised traditionally male notions of authorship. The aim of this chapter is to interrogate the position of novelist-characters through their physical representation, and how this has impacted upon perceptions of the novelist within popular culture. Whilst the previous chapter situated the novelist within the critical tradition, this chapter explores the implications of the sociological construction of the novelist and looks at how writers and the publishing industry have affected the way in which the reader has come to view the figure of the novelist.

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[193] F. R. Leavis, *The Common Pursuit* (London: Penguin, 1962), p.193.[1952]
[194] Watt, p.13.

Authorship theories – such as the implied author, or author construct – have created a place for the author within the text, whilst outside of the text the presence and status of the author continues to evolve: as a media personality the author has perhaps never been more alive as a marketplace persona. Authorial performance – in terms of signings, readings, talks, podcasts, Twitter accounts, panel shows, and television appearances – has become an increasingly important part of the author's role. Engaging with this celebrity culture has also, as Joe Moran points out, become a vital aspect of an author's marketplace success:

> The increasing importance of book publicity in promoting authors as 'personalities' is therefore a symptom of the continuing integration of literary production into the entertainment industry, making authors and books part of the cultural pervasiveness of celebrity as a market mechanism of monopoly capitalism…In this context, stardom becomes wholly self-fulfilling: the visibility of the author's celebrity name is used to bankroll products, making it harder for unknown first-time authors and their work to gain recognition.[195]

Whilst literary celebrity, as Moran notes, is no new phenomenon, it has altered significantly over the last decades. In the fourteen years since Moran's book was published it has changed even more radically: as well as existing media formats: television, film, radio, and magazines, the growth of the internet has led to persistent media coverage of well-known figures, authors included. Moran argues that this growing type of 'celebrity seems to enforce self-reflexiveness: for those authors who experience it, it often becomes a constant preoccupation – they talk and write about it constantly,'[196] usually in a negative capacity. The self-reflection evident in novels which feature novelist-characters therefore extends, with the American authors that Moran discusses, to encompass the impact of fame and contemporary celebrity up-

[195] Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p.41.
[196] Ibid, p.10.

on them and their writing. However, despite – or because of – the media attention towards authors, the process of writing still retains a degree of mystery and fascination inherited from Romantic notions of unconscious artistic creation. As the figure of the author becomes more prominent it seems to mask the very thing for which they are (supposed) to be known: the writing. The figure of the writer becomes hidden behind that of the author.

The enigmatic nature of the writing process has much to do with the solitary nature of the novelist, which is mirrored by the reader who takes part in this mutual seclusion:

> A man listening to a story is in the company of the storyteller; even a man reading one shares this companionship. The reader of the novel, however, is isolated, more so than any other reader…in this solitude of his, the reader of a novel seizes upon his material more jealously than anyone else. He is ready to make it completely his own.[197]

Benjamin's essay 'The Storyteller' laments of the loss of shared and community experience in storytelling, contrasting this communal enterprise with the isolating pursuits of novel writing and reading. However Benjamin also points to the changed relationship from storyteller-listener to novelist-reader: the connection between the reader and the novel (and supposedly with the novelist too) intensifies. Although there has been a general decline in book sales[198] there still remains a significant reading public despite the dominance of other forms of entertainment, which may be partially explained by this powerful and unique relationship between the reader and the novel. In *Why We Read Fiction* (2006) Lisa Zunshine suggests that 'we like reading fiction because it lets us try on different mental states and seems to provide intimate access to the thoughts, intentions, and feelings of other people in our social environment.'[199]

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[197] Benjamin, p.100.
[198] This will be discussed in more depth in the last section of this chapter.
[199] Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: The Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), p.25.

Although film and television also allow the viewer to 'try on different mental states,' it is still the novel, Suzanne Keen claims, which 'gets credit for the character-building renovation of readers into open-minded, generous citizens.'[200] The difficulty in assessing the value of literature to society is that scholars and critics are quick to attach their own readings onto particular works, as Angus Wilson writes in *The Wild Garden or Speaking of Writing* (1963):

> It is difficult to isolate the novelist's creative impulse as clearly even as the painter's or the composer's for, unlike a painting or a concerto, a novel acquires so many additional significances – social, psychological, moral, and so on – as it takes shape.[201]

Similar to Wilson's assertion that the novel acquires significance rather than beginning as visionary art, in A. S. Byatt's 1967 novel *The Game*, when the novelist-character Julia Corbett is asked if she believes in 'the prophetic function of literature,' she answers, 'I don't. That's Cassandra.'[202] Cassandra, Julia's sister, is an Oxford don who specialises in medieval literature. That it is Cassandra – an academic and literary critic – rather than the novelist Julia, who is labelled as the prophet (like the Cassandra of Greek mythology) indicates that it is the value literature acquires through its study that imparts a social function, instead of necessarily being the design or purpose of the writer to hold a mirror up to life. This idea of realist literature acting as a mirror to reality has been contested by critics, especially in Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*, which contests the limiting mimetic intention of fiction, finding that Romantic literature creatively illuminates instead of merely mirroring reality. In his 1976 *Marxism and Literary Criticism* Terry Eagleton discusses socialist realism's ideas of how the novel should relate to the world, finding the notion that the novel can 'teach certain political attitudes assumes that literature does (or at least ought to) 'reflect' or 'repro-

[200] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.39.
[201] Angus Wilson, *The Wild Garden or Speaking of Writing* (London: Penguin, 1992), p.148.
[202] A. S. Byatt, *The Game* (London: Penguin, 1983), p.146.

duce' social reality.'[203] Although, as Eagleton points out, Marx did not use the metaphor of reflection himself, it has become a fixture of Marxist criticism which seeks to locate the novel within a cultural context. Eagleton goes on to conclude that:

> The idea that literature 'reflects' reality is clearly inadequate. It suggests a passive, mechanistic relationship between literature and society, as though the work, like a mirror or photographic plate, merely inertly registered what was happening 'out there.'[204]

Although Eagleton fails to take into account that, as well as passively reflecting reality the mirror can also actively display it, the mimetic function of fiction is problematic, not least because it creates a divide between different types of novel – favouring realism over populist genres, such as crime or science fiction – when, in the current market, it is genre fiction which is now reaching the largest audiences. Eagleton suggests that, rather than being a mere passive reflection, literature can be harnessed as a tool for commentating upon, even instigating social change. In *The Game* Byatt participates in this tradition by calling fiction a necessary lie through which the truth can be glimpsed:

> It seems sufficiently clear – to me – that you can both destroy and create reality with fiction. Fictions – fictions are lies, yes, but we don't ever know the truth. We see the truth through the fictions – our own, other people's…
>
> We feed off it. Our fictions feed on us.[205]

Byatt, as a novelist and academic, connects the functions of both literature and criticism; having studied English under Leavis at Cambridge in the 1950s she is acutely aware of the value the critical tradition – in this case Cambridge criticism or Cambridge-English school – had

[203] Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.45-46. [1976]
[204] Ibid, p.46.
[205] Byatt, *The Game*, p.225.

attached to the social possibilities and qualities of a specific type of fiction. Christien Franken writes that 'Byatt herself has acknowledged that her work can productively be read in the context of these theories,'[206] even if her attitude towards Leavisite criticism is ambivalent. Leavis saw a moral value and social responsibility in literature, believing that 'literature and the study of literature could function as the lighthouse leading society out of [cultural] decline.'[207] Acknowledging the relationship between her fiction and critical heritage, Byatt writes 'although all my books have also been fighting a more or less overt battle with Dr Leavis and the Cambridge-English school of moral seriousness and social responsibility, I have also been deeply influenced by it.'[208] Byatt's explicit and direct relationship to Leavis and the Cambridge-English school might be seen as a metaphor, reflecting the wider impact of scholarly thought on British writers who grew up within this tradition. This case study may potentially be extended to include other contemporary British novelists, but it particularly applies to novelists, like Byatt, who were coming of age in the 1950s and 1960s when such criticism abounded.

In *The Game* Byatt explores the manifestations and results of a creative impulse through opposing characters, the sisters Julia and Cassandra Corbett. These characters may be read as representing two differing sides of Byatt's own personality – the scholar and the novelist – although many critics have instead seen these characters as a commentary on Byatt's relationship with her own sister, the novelist Margaret Drabble. Julia writes novels 'about people confined in a domestic pressure-chamber,'[209] and Cassandra is a scholar of medieval literature. Although, as a novelist, Julia is the most artistically creative, both sisters are subject to precarious creative bouts exemplified by 'The Game' they played as children, which cemented a devastating sibling rivalry and the beginning of Cassandra's inability to reconcile her myth-making with reality. Cassandra, speaking to Julia, states:

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[206] Christien Franken, *A. S. Byatt: Art, Authorship, Creativity* (London: Palgrave, 2001), p.2.
[207] Ibid, p.5.
[208] A. S .Byatt, 'The Pleasure of Reading,' in ed., Antonia Fraser, *The Pleasure of Reading* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992), p.132.
[209] Byatt, *The Game*, p.99.

> You and I created a world, we explored, in the imagination, things that were deficient in our experience. A normal procedure, I assume, only we carried it beyond the point where it was normal. There was a gulf between the life we created and the life we lived.[210]

While Cassandra continues to struggle controlling and ordering her creative powers, Julia harnesses and polishes hers – evidenced when she is interviewed about her latest novel, one whose subject material is borrowed from a visit to Cassandra's cloistered Oxford:

> 'Why do you write, Miss Corbett?' they asked her. 'What drives you?'
> She replied, after some encouragement, as I understood her, with much smiling, that she did not write either to 'express herself', or to persuade her readers of any social or moral truth, or 'to put forward a view of life.' She wrote, she said, compulsively, 'in order to understand events, in her own life, or others.'[211]

Byatt reflects upon the personal aspects of literature, rejecting Leavis's view of literature as a moral and social instrument. Julia's expression of her artistic purpose also provides a stark contrast to the view Cassandra has of her own creative writing, which takes the form of a rough journal, one that is indicative of her lack of creative control and, ultimately, her grip on the distinction between reality and fantasy:

> What she wrote was extensive and apparently unselective; she described, in accurate detail, every event of her days…It seemed, lately, that the journal was becoming an increasingly necessary means of distinguishing between what was real and what was imagined. Once she had used it for the opposite purpose, recording moorland rapes and battles alongside vicarage tea-parties

[210]Ibid, p.102.
[211] Ibid, pp.138-39.

> with indifferent skill as though the one ran into the other as she had imagined Oxford ran into the past. Daily events had been landmarks, tips of icebergs useful for locating events in the inner drama…they had deliberately blurred the edges that divided the real from the fantastic…and once the journal had been only raw material for some large imaginative work – something finished and formed.[212]

Cassandra's design is to create something 'finished and formed' from the rough material of her thought-patterns, but as she increasingly loses her grasp of reality Julia achieves what her sister cannot and turns aspects of Cassandra's life into her latest work of fiction. It is a conscious betrayal, one Julia recognises, with Byatt making a conspicuous distinction between the unpublished work and the novel that reaches the public domain where it takes on a different character:

> Unpublished, it was true, the book had been simply another part of that structure of our thought about another person which we do not admit to, and therefore do not have to justify, or stand by. But once it was made public, it was part of the relationship, it changed it, and indeed, made it impossible.[213]

Julia, who had previously used her work to understand her own life, then attempts to reconcile with and understand Cassandra through writing about her and her lifestyle. Other characters, including Julia's husband Thor and daughter Deborah, as well as Simon Moffit – a friend of first Cassandra and then Julia, with whom both sisters are ostensibly in love – recognise that Julia has betrayed Cassandra even through the attempt to comprehend her. Cassandra's grip on reality becomes even more tenuous and, unable to cope with the fact that Julia has done what she herself could not in appropriating and taking ownership of herself through fiction,

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[212] Ibid, pp.23-24.
[213] Ibid, p.216.

she ends her life. It is therefore Julia's success and Cassandra's failure in harnessing creative ability in order to reconcile fiction and reality that offer oppositional perspectives on the place of creativity in a person's life, and within society as a whole.

Byatt evokes the mythological figure of Cassandra, who is subject to prophetic visions, but (as recognised by the Cassandra of the novel) because she 'refused intercourse with the Lord of the Muses, and was thus no artist…like myself, a specialist in useless knowledge,'[214] her inability to express what she experiences ultimately destroys her. In making Julia complicit in her sister's destruction Byatt questions the value of her ability to express herself in and through literature. Byatt's novel addresses the potential for devastation literature holds by looking at ways it can be misinterpreted, and demonstrates her ambivalence to such highly moralistic critical readings as those employed by Leavis and the Cambridge-English school. This problematises the social status we assign to the author. Although Wilson separates the 'creative impulse' from the 'additional significances' taken on by the text, an alternate argument could equally be made for the writer being taken up as a spokesman. Gabriel Josipovici explains that, for the reader, the author becomes instrumental in communicating and uncovering different types of social experience and social reality: readers read in order to better understand themselves, each other, and the issues in society:

> The function of art thus becomes that of exploring those areas of the mind and of the universe which lie beyond the confines of rational thought and of ordinary consciousness, and the hero of Romantic art becomes none other than the artist himself, who is both the explorer of this unknown realm and the priestly mediator between it and his audience.[215]

[214] Ibid, p.141.
[215] Gabriel Josipovici, *The World and The Book: A Study of Modern Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979), pp.180-81.

This view places the writer in a position of great responsibility. The Romantic figure of the artist was seen as being able to traverse the extremes of the human imagination and express thoughts and feelings that the reader would not otherwise be able to experience or articulate. As Louise Rosenblatt argues, 'the reader seeks to participate in another's vision – to reap knowledge of the world, to fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain insights that will make his own life more comprehensible.'[216] The author relates diverse experience which, even when created rather than directly experienced, can educate and illuminate the world for the reader, broadening their horizons. In this way the author passes on knowledge and wisdom to the reader, who in return grants him superior status. The writer may be seen as a sort of oracle within society, as well as a public figure.

The assertion of this position was important for the writer in the post-patronage capitalist social system, prior to which 'authors made nothing from the sale of their books; their profits derived from the wealthy patron to whom the work was dedicated.'[217] Artists of all kinds had relied on patronage from either the church or nobility until changes in copyright law and the marketplace began in the eighteenth-century, which as Stephen Greenblatt discusses, provided stability in terms of demand for work and income which the new system lacked. This development was also crucial in forging the still lingering, stereotypical image of the writer as a social outsider; a view diametrically opposed to that previously discussed. Janet Wolff writes that:

> Starving in a garret, persists as a common idea of a social type, and one particular form of an historical figure is transformed into a universal definition…this ideology surrounding artistic production is itself the product of a particular descendant of the nineteenth-century Romantic notion of the artist… there were two crucial historical developments which paved the way for

[216] Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1995), p.7.
[217] Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (London: The Bodley Head, 2011), p.85.

> such a notion. The first was industrial capitalism. The second was the actual separation of the artist from any clear social group or class and from any secure form of patronage, as the older system of patronage was overtaken by the dealer-critic system, which left the artist in a precarious position in the market.[218]

These conflicting views of the writer – as social pariah or social representative – endure through the twentieth-century into the twenty-first. The Romantics encouraged the first view, the Victorians lauded the latter; it was increasing professionalisation of authorship from the mid-nineteenth-century, itself a reaction to a growing sense of disenchantment surrounding the figure of the author.[219] Richard Salmon, remarking on changing status of authorship in the mid-1800s, has found that:

> Authorship was not fully recognized as a legitimate profession…the national Census of 1841 grouped authors under the category of 'Other Educated Persons', of which only 167 out of 626 individuals declared their main occupation as writing. The 1861 Census was the first to recognize authorship as a distinct professional grouping, or rather cluster of groups.[220]

Arguably the professionalisation of authorship after the mid-nineteenth-century becomes evident in the differing treatment of authors in later Victorian era from those of the Romantic period when authorship was less well defined. It is significant that only one prominent novelist-character – David Copperfield – was written prior to 1861. Both Romantic and Victorian conceptions of authorship, combined with what Philip Waller terms the 'unprecedented phenom-

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[218] Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1981), p.11.
[219] For a full discussion see Richard Salmon, *The Formation of the Victorian Literary Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[220] Salmon, p.6.

enon, a mass reading public,'[221] of the late nineteenth-century, together produce an enduring if conflicted image of the author. Waller has suggested that contemporary British society is not the mass literary age the Victorian era was, as in contemporary culture the reading of books, newspapers and magazines has been supplemented by film, radio, television, and latterly the internet. The impressions of authors which have become embedded in society and culture are relics of the nineteenth-century that have proved difficult to escape.

As discussed in this introductory section, as well as in the previous chapter, contradictory impressions of the authorial or writer figure have led to the uncertainty which underpins depictions of the novelist-character in the twentieth-century novel. This section has explored a range of social issues surrounding the position of the novelist and how these have impacted the depiction of the function of the novel and the novelist-character in Byatt's novel *The Game*. The following section looks at various physical depictions of novelist-characters and how these may be interpreted alongside the status of novelist in society. Stereotypical notions of how the novelist-character might look and present themselves are discussed in relation to the role novelists see themselves, and other writers, as performing. Clichéd depictions of novelist-characters – as bearded and patriarchal, foppish eccentric, academic, or adventurer – demonstrate different facets or functions of the novelist-character, however they may also draw attention to the distinction of the novelist from any other type of artist, representing a recognisable physical identity.

[221] Philip Waller, *Writers, Readers and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.3.

II. DEPICTIONS OF THE NOVELIST

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Figure I. Posy Simmonds, 'As Time Goes By…,' *Literary Life* (2002-4)

[222] Posy Simmonds, *Literary Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), p.5.

In this comic-strip from her *Literary Life* series,[223] Posy Simmonds depicts a discussion panel at a literary festival: an audience member asks a question about the levels of violence, sadism and rape in the author's novel without it being made clear which of the four-author panel he is addressing. The assumption is that the writer in question must be one of the dark, brooding men when in fact the jolly, tweedy, friendly-looking author answers. Simmonds deliberately misleads the reader for comic gain by playing with stereotypical views of authorship, the inference being that the type of novel produced would somehow be reflected in the appearance of the writer. Typical descriptions of the appearance of writers have become established by novelists as well as by film and television representations, [224] where clothing has become a costume used to symbolise the personality of the author being depicted. As Jane Piirto illustrates:

> Popular images of male novelists and poets show them professorially clad, in khakis or in tweed sport coats with leather patches on the arms, smoking pipes; or, as in the image of writers like Ernest Hemingway or Jim Harrison, cradling rifles or fly-fishing, wearing horn-rimmed glasses or swaggering beneath cowboy hats…and what about the female writer? She is clad in mannish clothes, her hair cut in a butch, braless and strident…or she is whimsically virginal and intense, her long, tangled and flowing hair entwined with rosettes of wild flowers.[225]

Piirto's descriptions are, of course, exaggerated extremes[226] but there is a germ of accuracy to the way she casts these stereotyped authors; their appearances are often used to reveal something of their personality or psychological make-up as well as telling the reader what 'kind' of

[223] Published in *The Guardian* between 2002-2004.
[224] See, for example, the 2010 film version of Posy Simmonds's *Tamara Drewe*.
[225] Jane Piirto, 'The Personalities of Creative Writers,' in ed., Scott Barry Kaufman and James C. Kaufman, *The Psychology of Creative Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.3.
[226] As well as being more applicable to American writers.

writer they are. This section explores descriptions of novelist-characters and indicates how, in each case, the author has used the character's physicality to define their novelistic role. These visual representations can act as caricatures through which the author can comment upon the figure of the author and status of authorship, also engaging with social stereotyping. In her first novel *The Shadow of the Sun* (1964) Byatt questions traditional notions of authorship in her depiction of the father and daughter writing characters Henry and Anna Severell. Byatt has, perhaps more than any contemporary British author, consistently employed the artist or novelist as a character in her work – particularly in her first two novels, *The Shadow of the Sun* and *The Game*, in *Possession* (1990), and most recently in *The Children's Book* (2009), which fictionalises the life of E. Nesbit. The texts employed in this section have been chosen in order to convey a sense of the preoccupation with authorship in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, especially from the mid-1990s onward when the internet and social media become so pervasive. The Byatt text dates from much earlier, however it demonstrates the beginnings of a trope which has occupied much of her career. Both Henry and Anna are exemplary of caricatured authorship: they are oppositional figures and the narrative revolves around Anna's need to get away from the shadow of her father's success in order to develop herself as a writer. Byatt's depiction of Henry is dominated by stereotypically masculine concepts of authorship:

> The first impression of him was overwhelming – he was an enormous man, well over six feet tall, broad shouldered, with strong, wide hands, and a huge head, covered with a very thick, springing crop of prematurely white hair, which merged into an equally live, almost patriarchal beard. This has been grown originally to cover scars left by the war, but had the effect now of deliberate flamboyance, of a pose, aesthetically entirely satisfactory, it had to be admitted, as the successful literary giant – if the idea of posing had not

> entailed the idea of fraud, which few people would have accused him of. He was successful, and he was generally considered to be one of the few living giants. He looked like a cross between God, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Blake's Job, respectable, odd, and powerful all at once. But if all the hair made an immediate impact, it made it difficult to tell more about him. The mobile features seemed to retreat; his eyes, under the exuberant silver eyebrows, were pale and shy, retiring until they seemed almost empty… there was a curious reticence about him, a lack of presence, a lack of openness, which caused people meeting him to feel obscurely cheated.[227]

Byatt paints an evocative picture of her 'literary giant,' but one that is markedly ambivalent. On the surface he is everything readers have been taught to expect from a patriarchal writer – rugged, powerful, bearded, and almost sublime in his resemblance to stereotypical ideas of God, as well as Job and Tennyson – but like the beard grown to hide his scars he is found to be lacking in presence and 'almost empty,' the outward appearance of author-god just a façade. His outward physical appearance masks an uncertainty suggested elsewhere in the narrative surrounding his genius. This uncertainty is implied by both the narrator and by the point-of-view of his wife Caroline, as Franken observes:

> The reader accompanies Caroline into Henry's study and sees through her eyes that, as a character, he bears a striking similarity to Mr Casaubon in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and Mr Ramsey in Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*: two men who are, however sympathetically, portrayed as exem-

[227] A. S. Byatt, *The Shadow of the Sun* ((London: Vintage, 1991), p.9.

> plifications of impotent male creativity and misconceived intellectual endeavour.[228]

Henry routinely shuts himself off from family, friends and society, relinquishing power to his wife in order that she might take care of day-to-day matters. As such, he is dependent on her. In his relationship with his daughter, Franken asserts that he has only 'been able to create through a denial of Anna…his egoism and self-centredness are monumental in this regard…ultimately Henry is unable to see Anna as a separate human being, but constructs her as a mirror image of himself.'[229] The reader is able to recognise that Henry's forced association of Anna with himself is unjustified as her physical description betrays the fact that she is totally unlike her father and much more like her mother Caroline:

> She was small for her age apparently, and thin, with pronounced hollows above the bones at the base of her neck; she suffered, nevertheless, from the late adolescent padding of flesh which cannot be called fat, or even puppy fat, but contributes a certain squareness to the whole appearance of girls of a certain age…she was dressed, as usual, in a shapeless Aertex shirt…and boy's heavy jeans…her hair, straight and dark and fine, was like Caroline's…it hung half-way between long and short…she had Caroline's large dark eyes, and Caroline's narrow nose.[230]

Byatt's representation of Anna is amorphous: she dresses in shapeless, androgynous clothes; is neither fat nor thin; her hair is neither short nor long and she resembles Caroline rather than Henry in her key facial features. Her lack of physical presence exacerbates Henry's desire to shape and mould her in his own image, but by making Anna resemble her

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[228] Franken, p.46.
[229] Ibid, p.47.
[230] Byatt, *The Shadow of the Sun*, p.10.

mother rather than Henry, Byatt is representing the female novelist's resilience to adhere to the patriarchal mould society has attempted to force her into; resisting the idea that the female author needs to conform to a gendered stereotype. Anna's formless representation can be linked to the notion that as an artist, the writer must inhabit the role of the everyman in order to communicate with a wide readership. In a similar way Ian McEwan in *Sweet Tooth* (2012), renders his novelist-character Thomas Haley into a nondescript entity – one who is, upon first appearance, sexless, classless, and even timeless:

> I was right to have prepared myself for disappointment. It was a slight figure who rose from his desk, slightly stooped, though he made the effort to straighten his back as he stood. He was girlishly slender, with narrow wrists and his hand when I shook it seemed smaller and softer than mine. Skin very pale, eyes dark green, hair dark brown and long, and cut in a style that was almost a bob. In those first few seconds I wondered if I'd missed a transsexual element in the stories. But here he was, twin brother, smug vicar, smart and rising Labour MP, lonely millionaire in love with an inanimate object. He wore a collarless shirt made of flecked white flannel, tight jeans with a broad belt and scuffed leather boots. I was confused by him. The voice from such a delicate frame was deep, without regional accent, classless.[231]

It is exactly because of his fluid appearance that the narrator, Serena, is quickly able to identify the repertoire of characters he has created and inhabited as a novelist. Although physically unremarkable it is his deep *voice* which seems the most forceful and distinctive aspect of him, suggesting a confidence in his own writerly persona. McEwan's character is a successful up-

[231] Ian McEwan, *Sweet Tooth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012), p.139.

and-coming writer as well as an academic and although his appearance is intentionally plain, the strength of his voice transforms him in the eyes of the narrator.

Both Jonathan Coe's *What A Carve Up!* (1994) and Alessandro Gallenzi's *Bestseller* (2010) demonstrate character depictions of unsuccessful writers: the features described are remarkably similar despite the fourteen year gap between their conception. In this first extract Coe's Michael Owen describes himself:

> The eyes were puffy from lack of sleep and bloodshot from too much glassy staring at the television screen; deeply scored lines were beginning to appear around the corners of the mouth, although these were partially obscured by two days' worth of stubble; the jaw-line was still reasonably firm, but another three or four years would probably see the onset of a double chin; the hair, once tawny, was now streaked with grey and stood desperately in need of cutting and re-styling; there were shreds of a parting, so tentative and wasted that the onlooker might easily have been forgiven for not noticing that it was there at all. It wasn't a friendly face: the eyes, a deep, velvety blue, might once have suggested wells of possibility but now seemed guarded, fenced off.[232]

Like Henry Severell, Michael has become extremely introverted (almost anthropophobic), and Coe has used a similar motif to Byatt – of stubble half covering the face – to suggest a mask protecting him from the outside world. The beard also acts to reinforce an ideal, masculine ideology which the pathetic portrayal of these writers simultaneously undermines. The focus on the effects of fatigue and aging indicate that Michael has neglected himself; this also applies to the description of unpublished novelist Jim Talbot in *Bestseller*:

[232] Jonathan Coe, *What A Carve Up!* (London: Penguin, 1995), p.56.

> He caught his own bobbing reflection out of the corner of his eye and stopped dead. He saw a famished figure in front of him, with a dead man's shadows under the eyes and chiaroscuroed cheekbones. He felt old, he felt uncool. He looked at the way he was dressed: he had been wearing the same jeans, jacket and trainers for the last ten years…in pursuing the hollow dreams of success, he had lost touch with reality.[233]

Both characters' failures have been etched into their faces and frames – becoming manifestations of the adage 'to judge a book by its cover' – and their absorption in their work has detracted from the attention given to their physical needs and appearance. Jim's old clothes indicate that whilst he has aged he has not really grown-up, he remains stranded in the past.

These five descriptions have largely focused on the physiognomy of the characters and how these can be used symbolically to make statements about the writer's nature, whereas Piirto's focus was on clothing, the uniform of the writer. Clothing is of equal, if not more, interest than physical attributes because, unlike the ageing and weathering of physical features, clothing represents a conscious, stylised decision of the writer to dress in this or that way. It is tantamount to putting on a costume in order to perform a specific role, and has more deceptive potential in that dress can be used to conceal true status and identity – one can dress up or down. In Gwyn Barry and Richard Tull, the two writer characters in Martin Amis's *The Information* (1995), costume choice represents each character's differing state of mind, attitude toward their profession, and also how their success in Gwyn's case, or lack of it in Richard's, has affected their attire. The first description is of Gwyn, as seen by Richard, taking part in a photo-shoot to mark his fortieth birthday:

> Gwyn was on the windowseat, in his archaeologist's suit, also with archaeologist's aura of outdoor living, rugged inquiry, suntan. He filled his small

[233] Alessandro Gallenzi, *Bestseller* (London: Alma Books, 2010), p.49.

> lineaments neatly, just as his hair filled the lineaments (only a rumour, for now) of male-pattern recession. Gwyn's hair was actually grey, but bright grey: not the English grey of eelskin and wet slates; nor yet the grey that comes about through tiredness of pigment, and dryness. Bright grey hair – the hair (Richard thought) of an obvious charlatan. Richard himself, by the way, was going bald too, but anarchically. No steady shrinkage, with the flesh stealing crownwards like rising water; with him, hair-loss happened in spasms, in hanks and handfuls.[234]

Gwyn self-consciously sets himself up in the writer-as-explorer vein; his 'archaeologist's suit' instantly conjuring up images of Hemingway-esque machismo – much like those in Piirto's stereotyped view of the male author. It seems to suggest the idea of the writer as hero/adventurer, someone who is close to nature, as indicated by the suntan. Just as Byatt describes Henry's hair and beard as almost deliberately flamboyant and even fraudulent, Richard believes Gwyn's hair reveals him as a charlatan. The use of parenthesis around 'Richard thought' indicates his own point-of-view is not the view of the narrator, but that it is produced by Richard's bitterness and feelings of jealously over his friend's success. The view then shifts to Richard's hair and (as in Coe's description of Michael Owen) Amis uses the dishevelled hairstyle to reflect inner turmoil. Richard himself is equally as affected as Gwyn, but his waistcoats and bowties – symbols of joviality and eccentricity – are directly compared to the uniform of his youth:

> Just because he wore bright bowties and fancy waistcoats didn't mean he wasn't falling apart. Just because he slept in paisley pyjamas didn't mean he wasn't cracking up. Those bowties and waistcoats were cratered with stains and burns. Those paisley pyjamas were always drenched in sweat…at twen-

[234] Martin Amis, *The Information* (London: Flamingo, 1996), p.19.

> ty-eight, living off book reviews and social security, pale and thin and interestingly dissolute, most typically to be seen wearing collarless white shirt and jeans tucked into misshapen brown boots – looking like the kind of ex-public schoolboy who, perhaps, did some drug-impaired carpenting or gardening for the good and the great.[235]

The stains and burns clearly represent holes in the façade of both Richard's self-image and in the self he projects. Bowties, waistcoats and paisley pyjamas are all frivolous items, indicative of ties to old fashioned ideas of the gentleman novelist, whereas the clothes of his youth are comparatively modest and fluid in terms of class, for although public school is mentioned so is social security, representing changed circumstances. That the earlier version of Richard wears an outfit identical to that of McEwan's Thomas Haley reinforces the pervasiveness of this aesthetic ideology.

The post-2000 novels, including *Sweet Tooth* and *Bestseller*, which have been included here alongside the mid-1990s works by Amis and Coe (and the much earlier *Shadow of the Sun*), indicate a lack of progression in depictions of the novelist-character. These twenty-first-century portrayals merely reiterate previous representations, illustrating the fact that between the mid-1960s (if not earlier) and the present day the physical portrayal of the novelist-character has remained largely unchanged, in that the character continues to be marked by its ambiguity. This suggests that there has been no conclusive re-figuring of the role and significance of the novelist figure in the last fifty years; instead staid notions of authorship have persisted in fictional representations of the novelist. The physical descriptions of novelist-characters Henry and Anna Severell, Michael Owen, Jim Talbot, Richard Tull, Gwyn Barry, and Thomas Haley have demonstrated that uncertainty pervades these characters presentation as novelists – the only common features amongst these characters is their lack of definition

[235] Ibid, p.40.

and idea of clothing (the novelist's 'costume') as a façade. These representations are intended to highlight the contrasting ideas about the role of the novelist and their position in society. In their representation of their novelist-character, the actual novelists have tended to adhere to stereotypical depictions which question the authenticity of the novelist-character whilst simultaneously undermining these preconceived notions – such as the God-like visage of Henry being only a disguise for his physical imperfections and lack of substance – by giving rise to the idea of authorship as a performance in which the correct appearance must be adopted.

Amis's dual novelist-characters Gwyn and Richard, like Gissing's Edwin Reardon and Jasper Milvain and Iris Murdoch's Bradley Pearson and Arnold Baffin in *The Black Prince* represent opposing author-stereotypes, both physically and conceptually: in each case one is successful but talentless and the other struggles on in obscurity so as to maintain his artistic integrity. Whilst Edwin, Bradley and Richard remain artistically proud and unsuccessful, Jasper, Arnold and Gwyn compromise art for popular taste and churn out vapid fictions. Another example of this is found in Somerset Maugham's *Cakes and Ale* (1930) which includes three authors – Willie Ashenden the narrator, Edward Driffield, and Alroy Kear. Although all three of the novelist-characters in Maugham's novel have achieved a manner of success it is clear that Roy Kear, a reputed portrait of Hugh Walpole, is very much in the Jasper/Arnold/Gwyn mould; Driffield is the old master who, now deceased, is gaining greater public interest, and Ashenden is the talented, conscientious young writer forging a reputation for himself.

The opposition of financial accruement and artistic accomplishment is a common trope in novels featuring novelist-character(s) and the use of multiple novelist-characters accentuates the discrepancy between different types of literature, processes of literary production, and attitudes held by writers towards their work. Perceptions of the vast discrepancies between writers' levels of pay play a large role in further problematizing the opposing images of authors as either literary superstars or destitute outcasts. As John Sutherland writes, 'authorship has al-

ways been a badly paid profession. Indeed rewards are customarily so low for the many, and so high for the very few, as to make it seem no profession at all, but a lottery.'[236] This wide variation in terms of financial remuneration for authors feeds into competitive situations in texts with multiple novelist-characters. Humour is generated in the rivalry between two or more writers, reinforcing the idea of literature as a cut-throat business in which there are winners and losers. This concept is taken to its climax in both *The Black Prince*, in which Bradley is actually imprisoned for the murder of his friend and rival Arnold, and in *The Information* when Richard hires men to kill Gwyn. Both these narratives deliberately create confusion around the outcome in order to examine the veracity of different perspectives, leading the reader to question whose story to believe.

Dual or multiple novelist-characters dispel the idea of artistic isolation and solitude, exhibiting instead the community surrounding and driving the production and influence of literary work. They can too, through changes between friendship and rivalry, demonstrate that the novelist is entirely fallible and given to insecurity, thus challenging the image of the author-god and reinforcing the more attractive device of the everyman character. The destabilisation of the Romantic artist-hero allowed a greater diversity of character types by removing the parameters that had previously been used to define heroism, creating a space for female novelist-characters in amongst a proliferation of those in the anti-hero vein. The twentieth-century novelist-character is one removed from the pedestal of the artist-hero; as the case studies in Chapters Three, Four and Five will show the majority of contemporary novelist-characters created by male writers are extremely fallible and dispossessed of power and creative potency, whereas the female novelist-character has a different purpose.

[236] J. A. Sutherland, *Fiction and the Fiction Industry* (London: The Athlone Press, 1978), p.107.

III. WRITING THE FEMALE NOVELIST

> The thought came to me in a most articulate way: "How wonderful it feels to be an artist and a woman in the twentieth century." That I was a woman and living in the twentieth century were plain facts. That I was an artist was a conviction so strong that I never thought of doubting it then or since…there were as good as three facts converging quite miraculously upon myself and I went on my way rejoicing.[237]

Fleur Talbot, the novelist-protagonist of Spark's *Loitering with Intent*, thrice repeats the refrain 'how wonderful it feels to be an artist and a woman in the twentieth century.'[238] However she keeps her identities as 'an artist' and 'a woman' distinct – she does not term herself a 'woman artist,' and refuses to do so, so as 'to avoid taking on the consequences of women's social and aesthetic exclusion.'[239] Unlike their male counterparts, female writers of female novelist-characters tend to reject the post-war cynical depictions of authorship as seen in the form of the novelist-character, produced by male writers. Whilst male authorship is more historically secure, women writers of the mid twentieth-century are still asserting their place within the canon and those who have employed the female novelist-character have displayed a reluctance to make fun of the authorial figure, instead using the character to assert a degree of power, as Gayle Greene writes:

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[237] Muriel Spark, *Loitering with Intent* (London: The Bodley Head, 1981), p.25.
[238] Altered slightly in the later examples to 'what a wonderful thing it was to be a woman and an artist in the twentieth-century (p.182) and 'I felt more than ever how good it was to be a woman and an artist there and then' (p.201).
[239] Mary Eagleton, p.72.

> To make a protagonist an "author" is to give her control over conventions that have traditionally controlled her. It is also to grant her the powers of imagination, intelligence, inventiveness, that women writers have traditionally withheld from their protagonists.[240]

Greene only takes into account female protagonists in the work of female novelists which automatically eliminates three of the five novels discussed in this thesis, as both *Under the Net* (1954) and *The Black Prince* utilise male protagonists, whilst Angus Wilson's Margaret Matthews in *No Laughing Matter* (1967) would be excluded on the grounds that her creator is male. In her 2006 essay 'The Woman Writer and the Continuities of Feminism,' Patricia Waugh gives four examples of mid-twentieth-century female writers who began 'to use their fictions specifically to raise formal and existential questions about voice and authorship…such fictions often depict alter-ego writer-protagonists.'[241] These authors are Margaret Drabble, Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark and Doris Lessing. Waugh's named examples coincide with the female novelists already selected for case studies in this thesis – to be found in Chapters Three and Four – with the exception of Drabble. Although several of Drabble's novels, notably *A Summer Bird Cage* (1963), *The Millstone* (1965), and *The Waterfall* (1969) feature artist-characters, the explicit novelist-characters remain peripheral. Therefore this section will examine some of the anxieties surrounding female voice and authorship within Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* and *The Black Prince*, and Spark's *The Comforters* and *Loitering With Intent*. Chapter Five, which will examine Dodie Smith's *I Capture The Castle* (1939) and Angus Wilson's portrayal of Margaret Matthews in *No Laughing Matter*, further develop these issues in relation to the female novelist-character.

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[240] Gayle Greene, *Changing the Story: Feminist Fiction and The Tradition* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.17.

[241] Patricia Waugh, 'The Woman Writer and the Continuities of Feminism,' in ed., James F. English, *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction* (Malden, MA & Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2006), p.199.

There is an undeniable gender imbalance reflected within authorship theories, stemming from the historically patriarchal nature of society, especially in Western culture. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar find, in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), that 'the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power.'[242] Gilbert and Gubar relate the dominance of male authorship and creativity to the parallels between the author and God, 'the patriarchal notion that the writer "fathers" his text just as God fathered the world.'[243] In his study of the artist as hero, Beebe makes little reference to female authorship or female artist-characters – the female novelists and artist-characters he does mention are only ever as asides, failing to raise the issue of the female artist's status. In 2010 a study by Vida, a society for women in the literary arts, revealed that media coverage of male authors was statistically very much higher than that of female authors.[244] Of the publications looked at, which included *The London Review of Books*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Granta*, *The New York Review of Books* and *The Atlantic*, only one – *Granta* – had anything approaching equality in representation of the two sexes. The rest based over 70% of their reviews on male authors. In 2013 the novelist Katherine Heyman spoke out in criticism of *The London Review of Books*'s failure to address the gender imbalance of reviewed books and reviewers alike.[245] This argument resurfaced in early 2014, on the Guardian website's book blog, in a post entitled 'Why the LRB should stop cooking up excuses over lack of women reviewers,'[246] by Beulah Devaney; novelist Sophia McDougall then took bookshops (and their lack of displayed female authors) to task in her *New Statesman* arti-

[242] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p.6.
[243] Ibid, p.4.
[244] http://www.vidaweb.org/the-count, access 25/09/2012
[245] http://kathrynheyman.wordpress.com/ 2013/06/21/its-not-that-complicated-a-partial-list-of-eminent-women-writers/ accessed 11/03/2014
[246] http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2014/feb/25/london-review-books-women-reviewers-gender-inequality accessed 11/03/2014

cle, 'I don't want to be a rare successful female writer. I just want to be a successful writer.'[247] Eagleton's 2005 work *Figuring the Woman Author in Contemporary Fiction* offers a counter-argument to those who, like Heyman and McDougall, have challenged the reception of female writers:

> The blunter version of post-feminism would claim that there is no longer any need to posit 'the woman author' as a distinct figure since the battle has been won. Women authors fill the book shelves, have literary prizes devoted to them, are read as frequently as male authors in reading groups and, according to a recent piece on research in the United Kingdom, compose the most favoured courses in Higher Education. To insist on a special place for the woman author is essentialist, anachronistic and ties her to victimhood.[248]

Eagleton's study of the female author character in contemporary fiction takes into account thirteen or so British, American, and Canadian female novelists, including Spark and Byatt, as well as Margaret Atwood, Anita Brookner, Carol Shields, and Alice Walker. In her introduction she refers to 'the figure of the woman author who appears so frequently and in a number of guises as a character,'[249] since the 1970s. Her argument posits the reception of the English translation of Barthes's 'Death of the Author' (in Stephen Heath's 1977 collection of Barthes's essay, *Image-Music-Text*) as seminal in propagating the resurgence of the novelist-character. Eagleton finds, in her discussion of the impact of Barthes on female novelists and novelist-characters, that 'one group of academics was declaring the 'death' of the author as a figure of origin, meaning and power at precisely the same moment as another group, from

[247] http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/02/i-don%E2%80%99t-want-be-rare-successful-female-writer-i-just-want-be-successful-writer accessed 11/03/2014
[248] M. Eagleton, p.3.
[249] Ibid, p.1.

varying feminist positions, was looking for the 'birth' of the author in terms of a reclamation of women's literary history and an exhortation to women to claim a voice.'[250]

With the exception of *Loitering With Intent*, the texts under discussion in this thesis all date from before 1977 and include the male novelist-protagonists of Murdoch's *Under the Net* and *The Black Prince*. Murdoch's use of male novelist-protagonists has proved problematic for some critics and, as suggested in Deborah Johnson's essay '[Iris Murdoch's] Questing Heroes,' have contributed to the fact that she has 'notably not attracted the attention of feminist critics.'[251] Several suggestions have been put forward as to why Murdoch tends towards male narrator/protagonists, including Peter Conradi's theory of her 'literary transvestism,'[252] and Tammy Grimshaw's argument that 'Murdoch appears to have used the first person male narrator performatively in order to experience her own masculine gender.'[253] As Johnson points out Murdoch, as a woman writing in the 1950s onwards, must be conscious of the impact both her rejection of the feminine voice and her decision to use male writer-characters would have. Murdoch's use of a male protagonist is a way for her, as a woman, to engage with the long history of male writing she would otherwise have been excluded from if using a female novelist-character. As Jake points out:

> Nothing is more paralysing than a sense of historical perspective, especially in literary matters. At a certain point perhaps one ought simply to stop reflecting. I had contrived in fact to stop myself just short of the point at which

[250] Ibid, p.3.
[251] Deborah Johnson, '[Iris Murdoch's] Questing Heroes' in ed., Lindsey Tucker, *Critical Essays on Iris Murdoch* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co, 1992), p.48.
[252] Peter J. Conradi, *The Saint and The Artist: A Study of the Fiction of Iris Murdoch* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), p.36.
[253] Tammy Grimshaw, *Sexuality, Gender and Power in Iris Murdoch's Fiction* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 2005), p.214.

> it would have become clear to me that the present age was not one in which it was possible to write a novel.[254]

This predates Harold Bloom's theory *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) in poetry: Gilbert and Gubar have discussed Bloom's work in relation to women writers who they find do not suffer from the same 'anxiety of influence' but rather 'substitutes what we have called an "anxiety of authorship", an anxiety built from complex and often only barely conscious fears that authority which seems to the female artist to be by definition inappropriate to her sex.'[255] Reading Murdoch through these later texts it is possible to infer that her use of the male character allows to more fully interact with the historical weight of masculine authorship. In *Under The Net* Jake's friend Dave Gellman says that Jake would do 'anything rather than original work,'[256] an assertion which would be more difficult to justify if Jake were not a man working within a tradition of male authorship. Murdoch who is often regarded not just alongside but 'as one of Britain's "angry young men,"'[257] in part owes her influence and success in the British literary scene to her own refusal to accept and adhere to traditionally defined gender stereotypes of female authorship. Like Fleur Murdoch is both an artist and a woman but not a woman-artist.

Murdoch's later novel *The Black Prince*, also depends upon prerequisite male authorship to interact with literary tradition. Murdoch again uses a male protagonist, in this case to show the extent to which Bradley's art impinges on his life, which would be more difficult to express if the character were a woman. As Grace Stewart points out, a major concern for women writers seems to be that 'while upholding her womanly role, the female writer must somehow balance her bodily needs, her intellectual longing, her creative and her procreative urges, her

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[254] Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net* (London: Vintage, 2002), p.21.
[255] Gilbert and Gubar, p.51.
[256] *Under the Net*, p.22.
[257] Barbara Stevens Heusel, *Iris Murdoch's Paradoxical Novels: Thirty Years of Critical Reception* (Rochester: Camden House, 2001), p.16.

protective and her demonic impulses. Her art may emerge as lacking traditional form.'[258] Of the Lessing, Spark, and Murdoch texts, only Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* truly engages with and dramatizes this problematic balance: Anna Wulf is the only female novelist-character who is also a mother, she is also the only one who explicitly counters her biological needs with her creative needs. Showalter advances this as being a key concern for female novelists, noting a 'preoccupation with the conflict between personal relationships and artistic integrity.'[259] Like Byatt, who demonstrates that Henry Severell (as a male artist) can escape the confines of day-to-day life whilst his daughter Anna cannot, Murdoch requires a character who is free from social and domestic constraints in order to illustrate an innate preoccupation with the creative life. When Bradley is confronted with mundane realities his main desire is for escape:

> The burden of all these unpredictable arrangements annoyed me, when I reflected upon them, to the point of screaming. My desire to get away and write had been coming to a climax. I felt, as artists so felicitously sometimes do, 'under orders'. I was not at this time my own master. That which I had long served with such exemplary humility and with so little return was preparing to reward me. I had within me at last a great book. There was a fearful urgency about it. I needed darkness, purity, solitude. This was not a time for wasting with the trivia of superficial planning and *ad hoc* rescue operations and annoying interviews.[260]

Bradley's need 'to get away' would not be such a viable option for a female counterpart, as the family and home act as restraints upon the female writer's artistic needs. Ironically it is

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[258] Grace Stewart, *A New Mythos: The Novel of the Artist as Heroine, 1877-1977* (St. Alban's, Vermont: Eden Press, 1979), p.39.
[259] Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Writers, from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago, 2009), p.248.
[260] Murdoch, The Black Prince, pp.126-27.

within the confines of a prison cell that Bradley eventually gets all the darkness and solitude he craves and is finally able to create what he feels is a great work of art. The circumstances surrounding his novel's composition can be read in two ways: either the novel can only be written once Bradley is imprisoned, because only then is he truly removed from the world; or else the novel is written when Bradley is most at the mercy of society – the influence of reality and the outside world being of the utmost importance for creation. Bradley had previously stated the belief that 'life and art must be kept strictly separate if one is aiming at excellence,'[261] however he had at that stage been incapable of producing great literature and it is only when he contradicts his own advice that he is able to do so.

The second reading, in which the relationship between creating fiction and the influence of reality is given due credit, is also applicable to *The Golden Notebook*, as it is only due to Anna's rejection of a previous fragmentation of her creativity and acceptance of the influence of the outer world that she is able to 'explore and surpass meretricious, abandoned or incomplete stories, sometimes love plots…in order to arrive at some precious dialectical "golden" amalgam, through which a more dynamic statement about history, politics, and personal relationships can be articulated.'[262] Anna is the only female novelist-character who truly conforms to what feminist critics see as the central theme for the female creative artist, that she must be 'torn not only between life and art but, more specifically between her role as a woman, demanding selfless devotion to others, and her aspirations as an artist, requiring exclusive commitment to work.'[263] Anna's child, her romantic involvements, her friendships, her past, and her relationship to her writing all converge in a chaotic furore which can only be silenced when she stops struggling to order them and allows each its individual place within the 'gold-

[261] Ibid, p.176.
[262] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p.101.
[263] Linda Huf, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: The Writer as Heroine in American Literature* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), p.5.

en notebook.' This is not at all the novel that Anna initially sets out to write; early on in the narrative she announces that:

> I am incapable of writing the only kind of novel which interests me: a book powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order, to create a new way of looking at life. It is because I am too diffused.[264]

Only by acknowledging and accepting her diffused subjectivity can she achieve her true creative potential; through Anna, Lessing is not only making allowances for those factors that complicate the life of a female writer, she is also sending a message that in harnessing them an even greater art can be created. Anna had previously recoiled from the 'little novels or plays about the emotions [which] don't reflect reality,'[265] an opinion she shares with Lessing, who satirises in 'Free Women' what DuPlessis refers to as 'the "small, quite lively, intelligent novels" of the fifties in Britain, which Lessing regards with "despair".'[266]

The final author discussed in this section is Spark, whose novels *The Comforters* and *Loitering With Intent* both use the female novelist-protagonist to question the nature of authorial power, a recurrent theme in her writing. As mentioned in Chapter One, *The Comforters* was Spark's first novel and the first thing she wrote following her conversion to Catholicism. This was after she suffered a psychotic episode whilst taking the diet pill, Dexedrine,[267] and the novel makes use of some of the hysterias from which Spark suffered.[268] Many critics of Spark's work link her Catholic conversion and her novel writing, especially in her analogies between God and the creative powers of the novelist:

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[264] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (St Alban's: Granada Publishing, 1973), p.80.
[265] Ibid, p.61.
[266] DuPlessis, p.101.
[267] Stannard, *Muriel Spark*, p.150.
[268] This will be discussed in the section 'Written Out: Writing, Illness and Catharsis in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* and *The Comforters*,' in Chapter Three.

> Time and again [she] draws our attention to certain immutable parallels, as if by reiterating them she makes a point about their inescapability. Both God and the novelist create a world which they then people with characters simultaneously free and limited. Sometimes in novels, as in real life, characters resent and fight back at authorial or divine omniscience, and the dynamic relationship between creator and character is integral to Mrs Spark's plots…God, like the novelist, knows the beginning and the end, and the struggles of his characters to evade their destinies, that is, the process of most people's lives.[269]

Spark's protagonists – Caroline in *The Comforters* and Fleur in *Loitering With Intent* – both display this preoccupation with creative omnipotence as well as with what Bran Nicol refers to as Spark's 'fascination with the question of one's individual control over another – especially the curious, uncanny "battle" between and author and her fictional creation, the character, for control of the novel.'[270] The voices that Caroline hears narrate her actions, driving her to the brink of madness by making her believe that she is just a fictional character with little autonomy of her own. Spark reinforces the author-God analogy by having Caroline's friends ask of the voices she hears, 'was it a religious experience?' and 'was the author disembodied? ...was the author human or spirit?'[271] When she initially explains her theory to her one-time partner Laurence he automatically refers to the author as being male, but in fact Caroline has already defined the voices as sounding 'like one person speaking in several tones at once.'[272] Caroline is eventually able to undermine the authorial voice because she realises that it is only able to write that which it has experience of. Caroline states:

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[269] Ruth Whittaker, 'Angels Dining at the Ritz: The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark' in ed., Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, *The Contemporary English Novel* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp.162-163.
[270] Bran Nicol, 'Reading Spark in the Age of Suspicion,' in ed., David Herman, *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p.112.
[271] Spark, *The Comforters*, pp.50; 95.
[272] Ibid, p.54.

> The Typing Ghost has not recorded any lively details about this hospital ward. The reason is that the author doesn't know how to describe a hospital ward.[273]

She is eventually able to quell the voices by writing her own novel about her experiences, re-gaining her sanity by taking control in a similar way to that in which Spark handled her own illness. In *Loitering With Intent,* Spark returns to the issues of her first novel, creating in Fleur Talbot a novelist-character through whom she can revisit themes such as authorial control and the interplay of reality and fiction. The novel Fleur is writing, 'Warrender Chase,' begins to become confused with everyday life as Fleur's acquaintances begin to act out the novel from the stolen manuscript. Their lives then start to resemble the plot of that novel, up until the climax when Sir Quentin is killed in the same manner as the book's protagonist, Warrender Chase. Fleur's friend Dottie accuses her of masterminding events:

> 'You've already written it,' Dottie said, clanking down her teacup. 'You know your *Warrender Chase* is all about us. You foresaw it all.'[274]

Unlike the spectral authorial voice which plagues Caroline in *The Comforters*, the treatment of authorship in *Loitering With Intent* is presented as slightly sinister, yet playful, 'more like a stalker than a deity.'[275] Early on Fleur tells the reader 'I listened a lot because I had a novel, my first, in lava,'[276] and it is this quiet, observant author-figure whose 'intent' is to draw a novel from life. This is made explicit when Fleur recalls a scene which takes place in the novel's first pages – one in which she is sitting in a graveyard writing a poem when a young policeman comes up to her. By comparing the almost identical passages we can easily understand the point Spark makes. The first passage is the opening of *Loitering With Intent*:

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[273] Ibid, p.161.
[274] Spark, *Loitering With Intent*, p.198.
[275] Nicol, p.113.
[276] *Loitering With Intent*, p.13.

> One day in the middle of the twentieth century I sat in an old graveyard which had not yet been demolished, in the Kensington area of London, when a young policeman stepped off the path and came over to me. He was shy and smiling…he only wanted to know what I was doing but plainly he didn't like to ask. I told him I was writing a poem, and offered him a sandwich which he refused as he had just had his dinner himself. He stopped to talk awhile, then he said good-bye, the graves must be very old, and that he wished me good luck and that it was nice to speak to somebody.[277]

This is the same passage, reworked, towards the close of the novel:

> It was right in the middle of the twentieth century, the last day of June 1950, warm and sunny, a Friday….that goes back to the day I took my sandwiches to the old disused Kensington graveyard to write a poem with my lunch, when a young policeman sauntered over to see what I was up to. He was a clean-cut man, as on war memorials. I asked him: suppose I had been committing a crime sitting there on the gravestone, what crime would it be? 'Well, it could be desecrating and violating,' he said, 'it could be obstructing and hindering without due regard, it could be loitering with intent.' I offered him a sandwich but he refused; he had just had his dinner himself. 'The graves must be very old,' said the policeman. He wished me the best of luck and went on his way.[278]

The extraneous detail added to the second account demonstrates how the author has reworked the actual details (which we assume are more faithfully reported in the first account) into the stuff of fiction with the rewritten second account; this is the act of 'loitering with intent' that

[277] Ibid, p.7.
[278] Ibid, p.200.

the novelist commits throughout everyday life, living amongst the raw materials for fiction-making. The revised account includes more observation and detail – about the date and the weather; the likening of the policeman to a war memorial statue – both of which suggest that, in the act of looking back the account has been fictionalised, demonstrating how Fleur has refined her writing style. The last sentence of the original account, which has the policeman telling Fleur 'it was nice to speak to someone,' has also been stricken from the reworked account, in which he simply 'went on his way.' The representation of the policeman shifts between accounts – in the original he is 'shy and smiling' and 'didn't like to ask' what Fleur is up to, whereas in the later version he 'sauntered over to see what I was up to.' This could demonstrate merely a reworking of the character into a more authoritative and less friendly character, as may befit that of a policeman. However it may also display a greater tension between him and Fleur by removing this friendly aspect, the inference being that the author truly is up to no good and the policeman recognises this and attempts to accost her – she is demonstrably more forthright, playfully goading the policeman by asking him what crime he thinks she might be committing – whilst in the earlier passage she does no such thing. In this way we see a different kind of authorial-figure, as Nicol observes:

> Where modernists such as Joyce retain a sense of the author as a transcendent deity, albeit a cruel, indifferent one, late twentieth-century writers…present the author as voyeuristic and prurient, someone predisposed to "loitering with intent."[279]

Spark has reinvented the author-God trope to suit her purposes, transforming Him into a more fluid, androgynous figure who can take on many tones and forms; Eagleton finds that 'Fleur is, at once, the author-as-God and the author-as-jester. She is also the author-as-devil.'[280]

[279] Nicol, p.127.
[280] M. Eagleton, p.69.

Spark's Fleur represents a feminised author-God – the impact of her 'Warrender Chase' narrative upon the world of the novel demonstrates the power she exerts – as does her re-figuring of traditional authority figures such as the policeman, and her victory in preserving her own authorship and control over the attempted suppression by the patriarchal, upper-class Sir Quentin.

This section has demonstrated that representations of female novelist-character have been employed in order to challenge some of the previously accepted truisms about the status of female artists and writers. Murdoch's decision to use male novelist-characters demonstrates her own awareness of the constraints seen to act upon the female author. As well as a freedom from the domestic sphere which female characters may not be able to emulate, her male novelist-characters are more fully able to interact with a range of historical issues surrounding authorship. The female novelist-character is less able to engage with such impetus because female authorship is not as historically established as masculine authorship is. Where female novelist-characters have been used it has been in order to interrogate the perceived opposition of domestic and artistic arenas – as with Lessing's Anna, who discovers the importance of uniting not separating the different facets of her life; or to posit the female novelist in a position of authority and responsibility equal to, if not greater than, that of her male counterparts – as in Spark's novels, especially *Loitering With Intent*. The following section takes up the relationship between the novelist and the reader looking at how, whilst critical theory has largely disregarded the reader, in the publishing industry the reader comes to occupy a central role – that of the consumer, driving the marketplace – and how this relationship impacts representations of the novelist-character.

IV. THE NOVELIST (THE MARKETPLACE) AND THE READER

> How could it possibly be true that she appeared to be reading…a slim hard-back novel with my photograph on the cover? It's every author's dream, I suppose. And since it happens rarely enough even in the life of the literary celebrity, imagine how much more precious it would seem to the young, unknown writer like myself, hungry for any kind of evidence that his work has impinged on the consciousness of the public. The brief, respectful reviews I'd received in the papers and the literary journals…paled into insignificance in the face of this sudden hint that the wider world might be hiding something else altogether, something unsuspected, alive and arbitrary: a readership.[281]

This encounter between Coe's novelist-character Michael Owen and a female reader he meets on a train is an ironic interpretation of the importance the writer places on the relationship between author and reader. Michael's personal sense of alienation is lifted, albeit briefly, by the simple act of observing another person reading his book, and by the fact that he places this incident higher than any of the 'respectful reviews' he has received. This hints at the insignificance of the literary world in 'the wider world,' and places the potential interaction between writer and reader through the novel as being of the utmost importance to the writer. That Coe undermines this sentiment by staging the meeting between Michael and Alice suggests this

[281] Coe, *What A Carve Up!* p.264.

relationship is not only unstable but can also be insincere and problematic. The following scene reveals to the reader that the woman portrayed as Michael's reader is in fact a phony. This becomes clear from the beginning of their conversation:

> 'Do you mind if…?' I gestured at the seat opposite her.
>
> 'Do I mind? How could I possibly…I mean, this is so extraordinary. It's – well, it's every reader's dream, really, isn't it?'
>
> 'And every writer's,' I said, moving across to her table.
>
> For a while we just smiled at each other, shyly, uncertain how to start.
>
> 'I was watching you, just now,' I said, 'You were reading that big scene, weren't you – at the wedding?'
>
> 'The wedding, yes, absolutely. It's such a marvellous chapter, too – so moving.'
>
> 'Mm: do you think so? I was really hoping that it would be funny, you see.'
>
> 'Oh, but it is. I mean, it's, er, moving…and funny. That's what's so terribly clever about it.'
>
> 'You didn't seem to be laughing much, that's all.'
>
> 'No, I was; I was laughing on the inside, really. I never laugh aloud at books. It's just a thing with me.'
>
> 'Well, you've made my day, anyway.'[282]

Michael is so hungry for recognition that he is willing to overlook the 'reader's' misinterpretation of his meaning. The woman, Alice Hastings, has actually been hired by vanity publishers The Peacock Press to surreptitiously recruit Michael to write a commissioned biography of the infamous Winshaw family: the entire writer-reader encounter is a hoax. The exchange regarding the wedding scene satirises some of the ideas put forward by both New Criticism and reader-response theory, as the author and 'reader' pretend to agree with each other whilst in actual fact Alice (because she has not truly read the book) has misun-

[282] Ibid, pp.266-67.

derstood Michael's authorial intention, and Michael is so overwhelmed by finding himself face-to-face with a reader that he accepts her opinions even when he finds they do not accord with his design. He later actually does argue with a reader of his work; in this later exchange Coe paints rather a pathetic picture of Michael, revealing that whilst he willingly accepts the young, attractive female reader's hasty and inaccurate interpretation of his novel, he becomes defensive and cynical when his friend's boyfriend condemns not only Michael's own work, but the novel form in general:

> 'Graham's been reading your first,' said Joan. 'Haven't you?'
>
> 'I started it…I don't really understand why people write novels any more, to be honest. I mean it's a total irrelevance, the whole thing. Has been ever since the cinema was invented…any serious modern artist who wants to use narrative ought to be working in film. That's my general objection. And more specifically, the problem with the English novel is that there's no tradition of political engagement. It's just a lot of pissing about within the limits set down by bourgeois morality, as far as I can see. There's no radicalism. So there's really only one or two novelists in this country that I've got any time for, these days. And I'm afraid you don't seem to be one of them.'
>
> …'Who would they be, then?'
>
> 'Well for instance…'
>
> Graham mentioned a name, and I smiled: a pleased private little smile, because it was exactly the name I had been expecting.[283]

By anticipating what he feels is Graham's predictable answer Michael believes he has vindicated himself, when in fact he has, once again, largely ignored the views of his reader who, in

[283] Ibid, p.275-76.

turn, completely disregards the writer. This can be read as a performance of Christine Brook-Rose's 'encoded' reader, a reader who 'does in fact sometimes appear in the text, dramatized, like an extra character: the Dear Reader. But in another sense he is treated as a kind of fool who has to be told everything, a subcritical (*hypocrite*) reader.'[284] However Michael's interaction with these two readers arguably places him in the position of the fool.[285] Such a character can be seen to be more human, realistic and easier for readers to identify with, far removed from any notion of the author-god. The novelist-character has proved its popularity, by the very fact of its constant recurrence. The reader's identification with (and sympathy towards) the protagonist is crucial to the success of a novel, which partially explains the appropriation of the anti-heroic strain of novelist-characters. Although, as I. A. Richards writes, the author 'cannot stop to consider how the public or even how especially well qualified sections of the public may like it or respond to it. He is wise, therefore, to keep all such considerations out of mind altogether,' although he does concede that the writer does possess 'a desire to affect other people.'[286] Whilst there are differences in terms of the kind of success a novel (and indeed a novelist) can be seen as achieving – such as critical success, as recognised by literary reviewers and critics; institutional success in the form of literary prizes, and also canonical inclusion; and being taught within the academic institutions. Trevor Ross states that:

> Fame and recognition are traditionally the prime incentives for writing and seeing publication, but they also constitute authorship insofar as it is a form of distinction granted to writers by persons unknown to them. Authorship in turn brings with it the possibility of further distinction: reputation, prestige, influence, honour, immortality. Modern society sets a value upon an author's achievements by the degree and kind of each distinction, and it varies

[284] Christine Brook-Rose, 'The Readerhood of Man,' in ed., Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p.123.
[285] Further discussion of *What A Carve Up!* can be found in Chapter Five.
[286] I. A. Richards, *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), pp.18-19.

> the nature of these rewards to maintain different public roles for authors over and above their professional reputations as specific types of writers.[287]

A novelist's background and social conditioning affect the kind of novel produced, and that novel will, to a greater or lesser extent, have repercussions within the society that receives it. Raymond Williams has written extensively about the interplay between writing, culture, and society: in his 1961 *The Long Revolution* he states that 'it is often through the art that the society expresses its sense of being a society. The artist, in this case is not the lonely explorer, but the voice of his community.'[288] The relationship between the artist and society is one to which he returns, with a focus on the novelist, in *Writing in Society* (1983):

> Writing of prose is a transaction between discoverable numbers of writers and readers, organized in certain changing social relations which include education, class habits, distribution and publishing costs. At the same time, in its most important sense, the writing of prose is a sharing of experience which, in its human qualities, is both affected by and can transcend the received social relations. It is always so, in the relation between literature and society: that the society determines much more than we realize and at deeper levels than we ordinarily admit, the writing of literature.[289]

Williams, along with other Marxist literary critics, devotes much attention to the social construction and implications of art and literature, stressing its communicative powers. However Williams displays a tension between his Marxism and his humanism when he admits that writing 'can transcend the received social relations.' Williams's studies of the socio-economic and educational backgrounds of writers show a change around the late eighteenth/early-

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[287] Trevor Ross, 'The Author,' in ed., David Scott Kastan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature, Volume I* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.102.
[288] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), p.47.
[289] Raymond Williams, *Writing in Society* (London: Verso, 1985), p.72.

nineteenth-century, demonstrating that although 'the relative importance of middle-class writers continued…new social groups began to be better represented, with writers born in the families of tradesmen, farmers and craftsmen.'[290] This is reflected in Salmon's observations of the professionalisation of authorship in the nineteenth-century, which he finds 'should be conceived as a narrative of the disenchantment of the author…a gradual shift from the prevailing early-nineteenth century discourse of literary genius to an increasingly influential mid-century ethos of professional labour.'[291] Within realist fiction, this change in writers' social backgrounds impacted the reading public, effectively setting up circles of readers around the authors whom they found best represented their ideals, giving readers 'a confidence of a knowable world…based on an actual community between writer and subject, and thence an attainable public relation between writer and reader: a prose directly related to the ordinary language of the world.'[292] It also evokes the question Wilson Harris poses in *Tradition, The Writer and Society* (1967) – 'in what sense does society belong to a writer, and in what sense does he belong to that society?'[293] This notion of the writer and society belonging to each other is, holds Wolfgang Iser, of particular significance to the novel form:

> Like no other art form before it, the novel was concerned directly with social and historical norms that applied to a particular environment and so it established an immediate link with the empirical reality familiar to its readers. While other literary forms induced the reader to contemplate the exemplariness they embodied, the novel confronted him with problems arising from his own surroundings, at the same time holding out various potential solutions which the reader himself had, at least partially, to formulate. What was presented in the novel led to a specific effect: namely, to involve the reader

[290] Ibid, p.71.
[291] Salmon, pp.211-12.
[292] Williams, p.117.
[293] Wilson Harris, *Tradition, The Writer and Society: Critical Essays* (London: New Beacon, 1967), p.48.

> in the world of the novel and so help him to understand it – and ultimately his own world – more clearly.[294]

As with Williams's and Salmon's observations about the developing relationships between readers and writers, Iser's conception of the unique interplay between novel and reader is only really applicable to realist literature. However, I would argue that as speculative fiction is still used to by writers to interact with issues in contemporary culture – presenting the reader with metaphors to decipher so that they might question the nature of society – these fictions still act as a mode of social discourse. Therefore even outside social realism the role of the novelist is as facilitator of discussion and it is 'the convergence of text and reader that bring the literary work into existence.'[295]

Reader-response theory credits the reader with a degree of creativity in bringing the text 'to life' and Iser argues that this involvement of the reader is of crucial importance to the novel form. Whilst Iser sees the writer-reader relationship as vital to the success of the novel and, within the marketplace, the reader (consumer) is of paramount importance. However Mary F. Rogers's assertion that 'classical criticism ignores the reader'[296] still rings true. This imbalance is something reader-response criticism attempts to address, reacting to both author-centric and text-based interpretations of literary works by investing a varying degree of creative agency in the reader. Theorists like Iser, including Stanley Fish, Louise M. Rosenblatt, Georges Poulet, Jonathan Culler, and Norman N. Holland, have developed various different models for reader-response criticism. Prominent in the late 1960s reader-response theory grew throughout the 1970s and had achieved a popular stance by the '80s when it began to wane in influence. Critiques of these theories are similar to New

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[294] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p.xi.
[295] Ibid, p.275.
[296] Mary F. Rogers, *Novels, Novelists and Readers: Towards a Phenomenological Sociology of Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p.94.

Criticism's 'Intentional Fallacy' – in the same way that the designs of the individual author cannot be known, so the impressions of the individual reader cannot be known. This led Iser to develop the 'implied reader,' which corresponds to Booth's implied author. Reader-response theory is also problematic because different theorists allow the reader different levels of authority and autonomy. For example, whilst Michael Riffaterre situates the reader as a hypothetical construct, Fish sees the reader not as an individual but representative of a community of readers, and Iser holds that 'the reader is a series of moves or responses more or less predetermined by the language of the text itself but 'concretized' in the act of reading.'[297] The issue is that whilst criticism largely ignores the reader, in the marketplace, knowledge of the reader, or consumer, becomes key. The position of the reader as consumer feeds in to on-going concerns in the literary market – falling levels of readership and decline in printed book sales – and current concerns such the rise of eBooks.

The widespread appeal of popular authors restricts the possibility of establishing a personal connection between writer and reader, which leads to the popularity of author talks and book-signings. The literary market that sustains such notions of literary celebrity functions in an uncharacteristic way for something that has become so mainstream, in that whilst we might expect the mass market to be extremely impersonal it now actually *depends* upon a personal interaction between writers and readers, in fact 'readers, it seems, crave the personal presence of the author; they want to listen to them read or talk, and they want them to sign their books.'[298] As a result of such changes, authors now have to work harder than ever to encourage, attract and keep readers interested: television and other media appearances; author talks and book signings; use of social media and personal blog sites; literary festivals, and book tours all improve authors' chances of gaining more readers and keeping the existing fan base

[297] ed., Andrew Bennett, *Readers and Reading* (London: Longman, 1995), p.2.
[298] James F. English and John Frow 'Literary Authorship and Celebrity Culture' in *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*, p.51.

happy.[299] As Moran states in his conclusion to *Star Authors*, we now live in a 'meet the author culture.'[300] As writers have been exposed to more and more media coverage, and indulged their readers with talks, readings, and books signings, they have become simultaneously less recognisable. Malcolm Bradbury points out the curious duality of the author in terms of how the institution and the cultural media and readership see him:

> We indeed live in two ages at once: the age of the author hyped and promoted, studied and celebrated; the age of the author denied and eliminated, desubjected and airbrushed from writing…in the commonsense world, authors commonsenscially exist, in inordinate numbers.[301]

These conflicting ideas ensure that the figure of the author remains in dispute and continues persistently to appear, with ever increasing regularity since the beginning of the twenty-first-century.[302] Although it is thirty-five years since Gilbert Sorrentino, in *Mulligan Stew* (1979), wrote that 'the idea of a novel about a writer writing a novel is truly old hat. Nothing further can be done with the genre, a genre that was exhausted at its moment of conception. Nobody cares about the "idea" any more,'[303] it transpires that novels featuring novelists writing novels continue to be published. 2012 saw the publication of Swiss author Joël Dicker's *La Vérité sur l'affaire Harry Québert*,[304] a novel in which a novelist investigates the involvement of his former professor (also a celebrated author) in a thirty-three year old murder case: 'it became the most talked-about French novel of the decade. It has now sold more than two million cop-

[299] A humorous enactment of the changed role of the author in the new media age can be found in Paul Ewen's novel *Francis Plug: How to be a Public Author* (2014).
[300] Moran, p.149.
[301] Malcolm Bradbury, *No, Not Bloomsbury* (London: Arena, 1989), p.311.
[302] See final thesis conclusion for a list of novels published since 2000 which feature the novelist-character.
[303] Gilbert Sorrentino, *Mulligan Stew* (Normal, Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 2009), p.224.
[304] Published by MacLehose Press as *The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair* in the UK in May 2014.

ies, is about to be translated into 32 languages.'[305] Also published in 2012, Howard Jacobson's *Zoo Time* just like *Mulligan Stew* decries the notion of writing such a novel:

> This is when you know you're in deep shit as a writer – when the heroes of your novels are novelists worrying that the heroes of their novels are novelists who know they're in deep shit.[306]

Zoo Time's novelist-protagonist, the ironically named Guy Ableman, previously had reasonable success as a novelist but now lambasts the publishing industry, eBooks, and Amazon for ruining his career; explicitly addressing his anxiety over falling readership:

> She was my consolation for having lost my purpose. By purpose, understand readers. I wasn't the only one. No one had readers. But every writer takes the loss of readers personally. Those are your readers who have gone missing. When you have no one to address you address yourself. This was another way in which I was behaving strangely: I was self-communicating, speaking words to no one in particular.[307]

His suicidal publisher suggests he turn to social media 'so you can do our business for us. So that you can connect to your readers, tell them what you're writing, tell them when you're going to be speaking.'[308] *Zoo Time* sardonically reflects the contemporary situation of the literary market where engaging with readers over Twitter and Facebook is of enormous importance. Social networking sites have opened up new channels of communication between readers and writers; this levels out the power dynamic of this relationship whilst simultaneously creating a vastly impersonal network, lacking in privacy. The internet generation has

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[305] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10611852/Harry-Quebert-The-French-thriller-that-has-taken-the-world-by-storm.html accessed 12/03/2014
[306] Howard Jacobson, *Zoo Time* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p.22
[307] Ibid, p.22.
[308] Ibid, p.28.

led to the creation of a new breed of authors for whom Twitter, media saturation, and a marked presence within social media can undoubtedly impact publicity and, ultimately, sales.

The positive impact and value of social media for authors tends to be outweighed by what authors like Jacobson, as well as publishers, see as the death of the print book trade. Harper-Collins' CEO announced in 2012 that eBooks currently account for around 20% of their total sales,[309] and worldwide figures are reported to be around 15%.[310] Internet forums for posting creative writing are also increasing, providing creative writers worldwide with new opportunities to showcase their work. Even long-dead authors now have Twitter and Facebook accounts, usually run by either their publishers or literary centres and societies dedicated to promoting their works, such as the Centre for Iris Murdoch studies at Kingston University and The James Joyce Centre in Dublin. For living authors Twitter, Facebook, and personal blogs act as platforms from which the writer can share their views, discuss influences, declaim literary rivals, as well as promote new work, and inform followers of public readings and media appearances.

However, despite this continuation of generation and interest, conflicting contemporary views of authorship have somehow failed to align with each other, leaving a somewhat confused and disparate portrait of the novelist-character. Media interest, author events, and social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, and blog sites reinforce a notion of literary celebrity, one in which the novelist is revered and elevated within society whilst within fiction, novelists become bleak and shadowy characters, relegated once again to the margins of society. These two divergent representations may, in fact, be reinforcing each other: as celebrity authorship moves further away from the novelist's own understanding of their role so their disavowal of this enforced position feeds into an ambiguous portrayal of authorship within fiction. Writers seem unable to reconcile the media interest that surrounds them with what it is they actually

[309] http://goodereader.com/blog/electronic-readers/digital-may-account-for-half-of-sales/ accessed 21/09/2012
[310] http://paidcontent.org/2012/07/18/ebooks-are-now-the-most-popular-format-for-adult-fiction/ accessed 21/09/2012

do, which for them largely involves sitting at a desk making up stories. One might argue, as Ross does, that an author's identity as 'an author' is inextricable from his or her public consumption:

> Persons engaged in writing do not become authors until their works have been published and circulated. Authorship, the occupation or condition of being an author, is normally seen as an achieved status rather than an activity.[311]

This lack of clear definitions about what constitutes 'being an author' causes anxiety around the trajectory of literary fame, which has caused authors to question their motives as writers and marked a return to the grassroots of fiction: communicating to readers through writing rather than public appearances and media exploitation. The undercurrent of twentieth-century literary theory and its relegation of the author have added to these conflicting ideologies, reflected in a further ambiguity in the presentation of the novelist-character, especially from the late 1950s-60s onwards.

As discussed in the conclusion to the preceding chapter, this time frame is roughly concurrent to developing author theory – from the 1940s New Criticism, to Booth's implied author, Barthes's 'Death of the Author,' and Foucault's author function in the 1960s – although instances of novelist-characters had already begun to proliferate during the interwar years. The four sections of this chapter have each dealt with social factors which have impacted upon the representation of novelist-characters, focusing on the twentieth-century but supplemented by material from the twenty-first in order to demonstrate the ongoing nature of such issues, and the direction they may take in future representations. This final section has looked at the nature of the relationship between the writer and reader but also at the role which the marketplace and increasingly ubiquitous social media play in influencing

[311] Ross, p.99.

this relationship. Some concerns around this changing relationship and the various factors that effect it are expressed in Jacobson's *Zoo Time*, which explicitly engages with the impact of social media on the novelist. Ultimately I believe that the novels looked at within this chapter – particularly *What A Carve Up!* – are questioning, through their use of novelist-characters, whether the novel retains a social function and whether it is still a valid instrument for social commentary. The physical representations of novelist-characters have rendered them as either tired stereotypes or insubstantial and ill-defined: these impressions are reflected in the way the characters perform within the novels, dispelling both the mystery and power of the Romantic author and the industry and social value of the Victorian novelist.

V. CONCLUSION

Whilst the opening chapter located and compared different critical and historical modes of thinking about the various interrelated figures of the artist, the author, the writer, and the novelist – with a view to understanding how the representation of the novelist-character could relate to such thinking – this chapter has enquired into the changing position of the novelist in twentieth-century British culture and how this has impacted British writers' depictions of their novelist-characters. As in the previous chapter it has become apparent that the figure of the novelist has been subject to a variety of contradictory impressions which has caused the novelist figure, and therefore, I argue, the novelist-character, to become characterised by its ambiguity and fallibility. The functions of the novel within society, as well as the relationship between the novelist and the reader, have also been questioned in order to prefigure the cynical portrayals of twentieth-century novelist-characters, to be discussed in the case studies which make up the ensuing chapters.

In the quotation from *The Black Prince* which began this chapter, Murdoch put forth the belief that the novelist is occupied with (amongst other things) an enquiry into the nature of human consciousness. This situates the novelist as someone the reader looks to for – if not answers – at least a certain degree of illumination upon the human condition, and thus the novel becomes a valuable tool for social commentary. To understand the novelist's role in such a way places the novelist in a position of great moral responsibility, a notion which novels, such as Byatt's *The Game*, interrogate. As Angus Wilson suggests 'a novel acquires so many additional significances – social, psychological, moral, and so on – as it takes shape,'[312]

[312] *The Wild Garden or Speaking of Writing*, p.148.

not only through authorial design but through different readings and interpretations of the text's meaning, making the novelist's role more ambiguous and potentially problematising the relationship between writer and reader. In this way the novelist's position becomes confused and untenable – something which I see reflected in twentieth-century depictions of the novelist-character.

One of the many ways in which novelists have chosen to emphasise this difficulty surrounding the diverging perceptions of what the novelist's role might be is through equivocal physiognomy or clothing of characters. Physical descriptions of novelist-characters tend to play with the reader's assumptions – as in Simmonds's *Literary Life* comic strip – or else present purposely conflicted portraits – such as Byatt's Henry Severell, whom we are told 'looked like a cross between God, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Blake's Job, respectable, odd, and powerful all at once.'[313] However, we are also informed that Henry only wears a beard to hide his war scars and that, despite his seemingly overbearing appearance, he actually displays a resounding 'lack of presence.'[314] By contrast Henry's daughter Anna is presented as amorphously resistant to Piirto's gender stereotyping, which visualises female authors as either 'clad in mannish clothes…braless and strident…[or] whimsically virginal and intense.'[315] The physical descriptions of novelist-characters therefore manifests a discrepancy between how novelists are viewed or believe they are viewed by society, how they see themselves, and how they chose to present themselves. Their clothing and physical appearance come to define the role they see themselves as inhabiting (or else the role they wish to perform), which does not always correlate with how they are actually perceived.

This chapter has also discussed the issue of female authorship of novelist-characters, which has a complex relationship to (predominantly masculine) authorship theory in that female novelists have tended to reappropriate the figure of the author in order to assert their

[313] *The Shadow of the Sun*, p.9.
[314] Ibid.
[315] 'The Personalities of Creative Writers,' p.3.

place within the literary canon. Murdoch's male novelist-characters – Bradley and Jake – were found to interact with a literary traditional that would be difficult to situate if they had been written as female, whereas the female novelist-characters of Spark and Lessing were seen to represent aspects of authorship unique to female writers. Lessing's Anna most fully interacts with the dichotomy between the female writer's domestic and artistic worlds, whilst Spark's Caroline and Fleur both distort previously conceived notions of authorship by reimagining the notion of the female author as God.

Whilst this and the preceding chapter have examined various facets of the evolution of authorial figures and implications of critical and cultural thought on characterisations of the novelist within fiction, the following three chapters aim to situate these findings and their impact upon the novelist-character in one of the three suggested models of representation: autobiographical, frame device, or metaphorical. The following chapter is the first of three which take up case studies of novels featuring novelist-characters. The chapter will investigate the purpose(s) of the use of autobiography in the works of Anthony Powell, Christopher Isherwood, Aldous Huxley, W. Somerset Maugham, Evelyn Waugh, and Muriel Spark. The work of the third chapter interacts with the variety of themes introduced by the first two chapters of this thesis, particularly the relationship between life and writing, differing concepts of authorship, and the role of the novelist.

CHAPTER III: THE USES OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY
I. INTRODUCTION

> All writers, one way or another, depend ultimately on their own lives for the material of their books, but the manner in which each employs that personal experience, interior or exterior, is very different.[316]

This chapter looks at three different ways in which writers have utilised details from their own lives within fictional narratives centring on the novelist-character. Each of the three sections takes the work of two novelists, exploring and analysing how they have used their autobiographies to structure, propel, or inform the novels in question. The essential difference between an autobiography and autobiographical or semi-autobiographical novel is the intention and reception of each genre: if the reader is told that a work is autobiographical non-fiction then they expect (or even demand) the truth. This was certainly the case with James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* (2003), a work of autobiographical fiction marketed and sold as memoir. In 2006, three years after the book's initial publication, *The Smoking Gun* published the findings of an investigation which revealed that much of the purported 'facts' detailed in the book were entirely, or mostly, fictionalised provoking public outrage.[317] Embellishment is perhaps expected but pure fabrication devalues the word of the author – in autobiography veracity matters. The autobiographical novel, on the other hand, is within the genre of fiction and therefore does not need to distinguish between fact and fiction. Some aspects may be

[316] Anthony Powell, *To Keep the Ball Rolling, Volume IV: The Strangers All Are Gone* (London: Heinemann, 1982), p.14.
[317] http://www.thesmokinggun.com/documents/celebrity/million-little-lies. Accessed 25/03/2014.

based on 'real' life, equally some are invented, but the reader does not need to discern which is which.

The idea of life as raw material for fiction, as in Powell's quotation, is acknowledged by many writers and critics. William Spengemann, for example, states that 'everything a novelist puts into his fiction has a source somewhere in his "life".'[318] As well as the use of autobiographical material within fiction, Laura Marcus asserts that as modern autobiography evolved 'alongside, although independently of, the eighteenth century novel…[it] involved a borrowing of novelistic techniques.[319]' Indeed the majority of critical texts on autobiography highlight this 'blurring' of genre boundaries between fact and fiction. Max Saunders explains:

> The term 'autobiography' was coined as Romanticism took shape towards the end of the eighteenth century. Paradoxically, this is also the period in which the view began to emerge that all writing had an autobiographical dimension. According to this view, which became increasingly consolidated through the nineteenth century, and which is even shared by postmodernism, the distinction between autobiography and other forms such as biography or fiction is thus *always* blurred.[320]

However, unlike autobiography, the novels looked at within this chapter are not primarily concerned with the representation of the authors' lives; they neither seek to provide self-examination nor to communicate that self to the reader. The autobiographical element in each of the six novelists looked at performs a distinct task which has little or nothing to do with self-discovery and revelation. Instead, in each case, the author has used aspects of their own

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[318] William Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), p.119.
[319] Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.237.
[320] Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.4.

biography within the construction of a novelist-character in order to perform any of a number of functions, including: (i) comment upon the relationship between the day to day life of the writer and how it might impact their writing; (ii) remove doubt that the character is a fictionalised version of the real writer so as not to reduce critical commentary upon the text to mere speculation on the issue of whether or not it is autobiographical; (iii) faithfully reproduce a range of issues prevalent to the real writer which the novelist-character also faces; (iv) explore their relationship with the writing process through the character; (iv) give shape to the experience of the writer so that they might more fully understand different aspects of their lives – such as their reasons for writing, an explanation of the kind of fiction they produce, a cathartic process through which they might come to terms with their experience.

Powell and Isherwood have used their own biographies to structure their character's trajectories, lending shape to their narratives but also providing insight into the composition of the writing subject and the place of the writer within society. Their novelist-narrators do not simply function as mouthpieces for the author to voice their observations, in spite of Isherwood's own suggestion that they do. Both the Christopher character and Nick Jenkins share almost identical backgrounds with their creators. Through Christopher, Isherwood unites himself, the real writer, with a writer-character who comes to stand in for the writing persona and through whom he demonstrates how the act of becoming a writer changes the person. His consistent use of Christopher as a character in multiple novels and across several narrative strands within those novels demonstrates the fluidity of the real and fictional worlds as well as creating a complex and sometimes contradictory idea of himself. He effectively mythologises himself through repeated fictional renderings of characters who share his name but alter between novels, contributing to Isherwood's own personal myth. Powell's Nick, rather than possessing his own identity, inhabits many aspects of Powell's own biography – he shares the circumstances of his birth and family, his marriage, his friends, and his vocation, amongst

other characteristics. Nick's self-effacing nature and his occupation as a novelist position him on the sidelines of the action which he merely observes and relates: he becomes the frame for the narrative and a filter through which the reader sees the action of the novel move through time. This design seems to accord with Powell's own ideas about the function of the novelist.

Huxley and Maugham's novelist-characters act as expressions of authorial self-division, which Huxley uses to illustrate his theory of the novel and Maugham to demonstrate the complexity of the novelist figure. Maugham's novel features three novelist-characters all of whom have been given different facets of his own life and writerly nature. With Ashenden he shares the most biographical details, such as his childhood and adolescence as well as his medical background. Kear and Driffield represent different projections of himself – present and future personalities which he worried about inhabiting. In a similar way, Huxley divided himself into the novelist Quarles, whom he uses to enact various theories on what work the novel should perform, and Walter Bidlake – a character he used to enact the breakdown of his own extra-marital affair and the impact it had upon his wife and family. This cathartic feature of the autobiographical novelist-character is also used by both Waugh and Spark, who rework difficult personal experiences as the basis for novels in which they write to exorcize trauma and reconcile themselves with these events. In writing about himself under the thinly veiled guise of fiction Waugh allowed the reader to associate him with Pinfold. By explicitly declaring a similarity between what happens to Pinfold and what happened to Waugh he was able to honestly express his period of mental disturbance so as to avoid the possibility of endless public speculation on events and thus regulate how his illness was interpreted. It also allowed him to feel that the experience had been encapsulated, and thus contained, through his writing it down. Spark's similar breakdown and use of it within her novel not only performs a cathartic function but it turns the notion of a clear distinction between fiction and reality into a metafictional nightmare, as a means of interrogating man's relation to God, something which was

to become a central theme in her fiction. With her first novel, written concurrently with her conversion to Catholicism, Spark was able to reinvent herself – rendering her past within the past of her fictional protagonist Caroline, which enabled her to expel a version of herself she no longer felt she was.

In each work the role of the novelist-character is shown to perform a function indicative of the archetypal writer figure and what he or she represents. The use of autobiography in each case is not simply superficial; it contests stereotypical notions of autobiographical fiction and its position on the boundaries between art and reality. The works of Powell, Isherwood, Huxley and Maugham (all writing during or of the inter-war years) are characteristic of a period in which the failings and frustrations of society are channelled into introspective and self-critical autobiographical works, but each also questions – within the novelist-character – the role of the novelist. Waugh and Spark, both writing over a decade after the end of WWII, are similarly concerned with this role but also with illness, specifically mental breakdown, where the self turns upon itself, and reality and fantasy converge, as a metaphor for the precarious relationship a writer has with his/her interior and exterior worlds. All the novelist-characters analysed act to destabilise the readers' perception of the biographical writer as well as the concept of authorship; they contribute to an elusive and constantly evolving idea of the figure of the novelist.

The six writers have used facets of their own lives in order to augment their fiction and their novelist-characters, which demonstrates not only the integral interplay between fact and fiction, but also suggest a great number of ways in which autobiography can be used to strengthen fiction. The various uses of autobiography do not simply lend structure and verisimilitude to narrative, nor do they simply form the basis of plot based upon a life. Although many writers write autobiographically in order to begin the process of transforming themselves into writers, as discussed in Chapter I, autobiography in fiction can have many diverse

functions. The cases explored within this chapter establish some of the potential uses for autobiographical material: the author may endow his or her novelist-protagonist with fragments of their own biography and interrogate some of the ways in which this autobiographical element has been used to comment upon the role of the novelist.

Taking Isherwood's proclamation that his namesake-narrator functioned only as a mouthpiece, the opening section investigates both he and Powell's use of a self-effacing novelist-narrator. Isherwood's name and Powell's biography had been given to their protagonists in order that they be equated with their creators so as to question the levels of fictionality at play within their novel sequences, but also to comment upon the position of the novelist as outsider or onlooker within the novel. In line with much writing from the inter-war period, this novelist-character was also self-analytical of his place in society, and questioned how the writer should act in times of crisis. This theme also permeates the novels of Huxley and Maugham; their commentary upon modern society is bound up with concepts such as freedom and wholeness which they see as integral to a harmonious ideal of humanity. Both these writers split aspects of their biography, personality and artistic ideologies into various characters in order to demonstrate the multiple identities of the novelist. Both Waugh and Spark used detail from their own breakdowns to realistically convey the sense of desperation and persecution but also to illustrate the precarious, unstable borderline between the inner and outer worlds – between fact and fantasy. The division of public and private also resonated within these novels of mental illness, with the boundaries between worlds of fiction and reality breaking down as a metaphor for the dubious and dual position of the author operating between these two spheres. Both Pinfold and Caroline, like Waugh and Spark, are able to harness their demons creatively, using their experiences of mental illness to create works of fiction.

II. A 'CONVENIENT VENTRILOQUIST'S DUMMY'?

The Narrator as Mouthpiece in Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time* and Christopher Isherwood's *Down There on a Visit*

> Because I have given my own name to the 'I' of this narrative, readers are certainly not entitled to assume that its pages are purely autobiographical, or that its characters are libellously exact portraits of living persons. 'Christopher Isherwood' is a convenient ventriloquist's dummy, nothing more.[321]

The autobiographical component in the work of both Christopher Isherwood and Anthony Powell is at the forefront of much critical attention devoted to them: of the six authors under discussion in this chapter their narratives are certainly the most overtly autobiographical. As the quotation from Powell in the introduction to this chapter suggests, there are numerous ways in which a novelist may utilise his/her own life in their writing: Isherwood and Powell have made particular conscious decisions in representing aspects of autobiography within their fiction. Neither author denied the role autobiography played in their writing, although Powell, as evinced in his memoirs, journals, and interviews, tired of associations with his narrator Nick Jenkins while freely admitting the real-life sources for other major characters within his novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time*. Isherwood, though he wrote supposedly designated autobiography as well as novels, blurs fact and fiction in what Rose Kamel understands as a quest to build his own 'personal myth, which he will reconstruct from bits and pieces of documented history.'[322]

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[321] Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* (St Albans: Triad/Panther Books, 1977), p.11.
[322] Rose Kamel, '"Unravelling One's Personal Myth": Christopher Isherwood's Autobiographical

This section questions how these two authors have used their own lives as raw materials through which to provide structure and verisimilitude to their narratives and in their depictions of their novelist-characters, and examines to what extent the characters they use are simply mouth-pieces or alter egos. Powell and Isherwood both employ their own autobiographies in the construction of the novelist-characters Nick Jenkins and Christopher Isherwood, albeit to different purpose and effect. Neither they nor this common aspect of their works has ever been discussed together; although Michael Barber, Powell's biographer, notes that their backgrounds were 'almost identical.'[323] They were born only a year apart, both attended public school and then Oxbridge before 'coming of age' as writers in the 1930s although, whilst Isherwood was very much part of what has become known as the Auden generation, Powell is demonstrably absent from critical works on this period[324] – if mentioned at all then only in passing. Powell's conservative leanings, contrasting with the Auden generation's left-wing stance, impacted the reception of his work among his peers. In terms of his publishing history, although Powell did publish five novels before WWII and was known within literary circles during the 1930s, it is *A Dance* for which he is remembered: whilst the first six volumes of the sequence are set between 1920 and 1939, they did not begin to be published until the 1950s. Comparatively, one of Isherwood's best known texts, *Goodbye to Berlin*, was published in 1939 when he had already written three novels as well as *Lions and Shadows* (1938), ostensibly an autobiography although in a note 'To The Reader' Isherwood offers the advice: 'read it as a novel.'[325]

If we take *Goodbye to Berlin* as the best known Isherwood novel then its publication date marks Isherwood as a novelist of the thirties; Powell's renown came later so he is not usually

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Strategies,' *Biography*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1982, Spring), p.162.

[323] Michael Barber, *Anthony Powell: A Life* (London: Duckworth Overlook, 2005), p.82.

[324] See also Robert Graves and Alan Hodge *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), Jack Lindsay, *After the 'Thirties: The Novel in Britain and its Future* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956), Chris Hopkins, *English Fiction in the 1930s: Language, Genre, History* (London: Continuum, 2006).

[325] Christopher Isherwood, *Lions and Shadows: An Education in the Twenties* (London: Minerva, 1996), p.5.

regarded as a thirties novelist. In spite of this, Powell's subject matter in the first half of the *Dance* cycle, as well as his own biography, situates him alongside Isherwood and his cohorts in a period which, as Karl Miller states, was pivotal to a changing view of authors and their position within society:

> The idea of a writer as someone who is both a public figure and a recluse is ancient, and so is the idea of the writer as free agent – free, for instance, to decide for himself what he owes or shows to the people he lives among. Since the early Thirties these ideas have been exposed to an insistence that writers are in various ways formed or forced by the society they inhabit and the medium they employ.[326]

The chaos of the inter-war years complicated the relationship writers held with society. In *The Auden Generation*, Samuel Hynes takes one of Auden's poems for Isherwood 'To A Writer on His Birthday' (1935) as symptomatic of the writer's changing concern for society:

> So in this hour of crisis and dismay
> What better than your strict and adult pen
> Can warn us from the colours and the consolations,
> The showy arid works, reveal
> The squalid shadow of academy and garden,
>
> Make action urgent and its nature clear?[327]

Hynes sees Auden's poem and what it urges of the writer as indicative of an attempt to respond to crisis:

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[326] Karl Miller, *Authors* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1989), p.164.
[327] W. H. Auden, 'To A Writer on His Birthday' lines 81-88, in ed., Robin Skelton, *Poetry of the Thirties* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.169.

> By his pen – in his role as a writer, and not simply as a citizen – he will make men aware of the need for action, and of course what action means. His insight will give men strength to resist their enemies, without and within. This is more than simply a moral theory of literature, it asserts a direct relation between literature and action in the public world; writing becomes a mode of action.[328]

The impetus to act, as well as to write, defined this generation's increasingly self-conscious and self-critical approach to narrative; fact and fiction as well as public and private selves became integrated and blurred, but 'the self assumed a new importance as a source of stability.'[329] Virginia Woolf remarks upon this in her essay 'The Leaning Tower' (1940), in which she reflects upon the writer's position in society before turning to what she terms 'leaning-tower' writers. These are writers who, in terms of background and education are ensconced within 'the tower' but, when they look down upon the real world, their overwhelming urge is to confront in their writing the problems they see within society, which reflects their social conscience. Her explanation of their preoccupation with the self is that:

> When everything is rocking round one, the only person who remains comparatively stable is oneself. When all the faces are changing and obscured, the only face one can see clearly is one's own. So they wrote about themselves…the leaning tower writers wrote about themselves honestly, therefore creatively. [330]

Isherwood particularly took the notion of the self, its construction and analysis, to the heart of his writing; this preoccupation has led David Garrett Izzo to assert that 'never has a writer so aptly described through fictionalized autobiography and factual autobiography the nature of

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[328] Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p.13.
[329] Lisa M. Schwerdt, *Isherwood's Fiction: The Self and Technique* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p.4.
[330] Virginia Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower' in *The Moment, and other Essays* (London: Hogarth Press, 1947), p.120.

his individual development in the changing world.'[331] He dramatizes himself as a character in much of his fiction and nowhere is this more effective than in the novels and autobiographies which deal with his formation as a writer. *Lions and Shadows*, *Goodbye to Berlin*, *Down There on a Visit* (1962), and *Christopher and His Kind* (1976) all employ the first-person narrator 'Christopher Isherwood,'[332] also termed the namesake narrator. Discussion of this narrator preoccupies a great deal of the analysis of these texts. Isherwood's instruction as to how the reader should respond to the namesake narrator, and what bearing he has upon our interpretation of the biographical Isherwood, ranges throughout the texts from the reader's note at the beginning of *Lions and Shadows* to the infamous declaration 'I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording and not thinking'[333] in *Goodbye to Berlin*. The question remains: if Isherwood was determined not to have readers view these multiple narrators as autobiographical, why did he persist in giving them his own name? He could have easily invented a name for his narrator-character, as Joyce did with Stephen Dedalus. Similarly, why does Powell invest Nick Jenkins with so much of his own biography?

Isherwood's gift of his name to his character and Powell's of his personal history are doing more within the text than just filling gaps and lending verisimilitude: they are part of important narrative strategies. In Isherwood's case his constantly revised performances of self contribute to his personal myth. In *Down There on a Visit* he returns to the fragmented narrative engaged in *Goodbye to Berlin* with four detached stories: 'Mr Lancaster', 'Ambrose', 'Waldemar,' and 'Paul' taking place in 1928, 1932, 1938 and 1940. Each tells the story of a different time and place and focuses on Christopher's relationships with the titular characters. However, each story is also a trail of his evolution as a writer. It is in this narrative Isherwood

[331] David Garrett Izzo, *Christopher Isherwood: His Era, His Gang, and the Legacy of the Truly Strong Man* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), pp.3-4.
[332] I will from this point forward distinguish between writer and characters by calling the real, historical Christopher Isherwood 'Isherwood' and the various narrator-characters 'Christopher.'
[333] Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*, p.11.

prompts the reader to acquaint him with his multiple Christopher characters, by means of his name:

> Of course, he *is* almost a stranger to me. I have revised his opinions, changed his accent and his mannerisms, unlearned or exaggerated his prejudices and his habits. We still share the same skeleton, but its outer covering has altered so much that I doubt if he would recognize me on the street. We have in common the label of our name, and a continuity of consciousness; there has been no break in the sequence of daily statements that I am I.…The Christopher who sat in that taxi is, practically speaking, dead; he only remains reflected in the fading memories of us who knew him. I can't revitalize him now. I can only reconstruct him from his remembered acts and words and from the writings he has left us…in a sense he is my father, and in another sense my son.[334]

In this statement we see clearly the layers of Christophers that go towards the construction of Isherwood himself. The narrator who ties the four narratives together is equally separate from the Christopher character in each story, but as the stories move on the character draws closer to the narrator and also to Isherwood. This progression can be traced in the anxiety that each of the four Christophers holds towards his own writing. In the first story, 'Mr Lancaster,' Christopher is extremely self-conscious and self-critical of his writing, telling himself 'I must beware of romanticizing him' and 'he was not the character I would have chosen for my epic', 'wasn't I a novelist,' 'everything was potential material.'[335] He also has several conversations with Mr Lancaster, based upon Isherwood's cousin Basil Fry,[336] about the art of writing and concerns over the novel he has just published. In the following story, 'Ambrose,' writing re-

[334] Christopher Isherwood, *Down There on a Visit* (London: Penguin, 2012), p.6.
[335] Ibid, p.8.
[336] Schwerdt, p.143.

mains important to Christopher but his anxieties have shifted towards defining the role of the writer within society, played out in the synecdoche of the island setting 'he has assigned roles to all of us…I am supposed to write my novel' and 'I had to double the roles of Christopher, Geoffrey, Hans and Waldemar. And thus I almost ceased being myself.'[337] He is also, humorously, forced to face the limits of his fame as a writer, when a visitor to the island confuses him with someone else:

> 'Oh, but I know Mr Isherwood,' cried Maria, shaking hands with me. 'Only lately, I read your delightful novel…truly delightful! This young man who is a schoolmaster and becomes imprisoned for the traffic in white slaves – *quel esprit*!'
>
> 'I'm afraid that's by Evelyn Waugh,' I said, not charmed.[338]

At the close of the Ambrose chapter, when Christopher finally leaves the island, he is furious to find that a close contemporary of his has become famous for his writing: 'Happened to catch on. All a matter of luck…you little whore, I told him.'[339] However, when the following section opens we find his position changed; 'I'm quite a considerable celebrity. Just now my writing is fashionable to exactly the right degree.'[340] 'Waldemar' is set six years after 'Ambrose' and in the intervening years most of Christopher's anxiety over his writing career seems to have dissipated; he mentions it only occasionally, even less so by the time we reach 'Paul.' Christopher has moved to Hollywood and is working as a script-writer, and here, as Paul Wiley finds, 'the ghosts have largely ceased to bother'[341] him. The meaning of these 'ghosts' refers also, of course, to the characters who have inhabited Christopher's past as well

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[337] *Down There,* pp.94;135.
[338] Ibid, p.122.
[339] Ibid, p.138.
[340] Ibid, p.147.
[341] Paul Wiley, 'Down There on a Visit by Christopher Isherwood,' *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature,* Vol. 4, No. 2 (Spring - Summer, 1963), p.227.

as the ghosts of his former selves which are so inextricably tied up with his writing. The loss of the 'ghosts' has a curious effect on Christopher; he appears to have diffused within the machine of Hollywood and the religious order (Isherwood's Vedanta), so much so that in the 'Paul' chapter he becomes a relatively liminal character. For the first time the titular character takes the focus of the narrative; this can be read either as a dissemination of Christopher within the writing process, or else a mark of his changing as a novelist – he no longer needs to write himself in order to write.

There is a distinct similarity between this final, effaced Christopher and Nick Jenkins. Nick is both the narrator of and a character in the narrative; however, he is not the focus of the story, even in the early volumes. He, like Christopher in 'Paul,' is confined to the edges, to the wings, whilst the characters he knows, observes, and reflects upon take centre stage. The reader receives all the information about the cast of characters in *A Dance* through the filter of Nick: he is neutral and self-effacing, therefore his occupation as a novelist is important because it goes some way towards explaining why he is such a keen social observer and chronicler. His literary ambitions are also intended to act as a foil to Kenneth Widmerpool's political ambitions, especially considering Widmerpool's distain for the arts. Towards the end of the first volume, *A Question of Upbringing*, Widmerpool draws Nick into a discussion about their respective futures. When asked 'What profession are you going to follow?' Nick hesitates at first:

> Being at that moment unprepared for an *a priori* discussion as to what the future should hold, I made several rather lame remarks to the effect that I wanted one day 'to write': an assertion that had not even the merit of being true…

> ‘To write?’ said Widmerpool. ‘But that is hardly a profession.’[342]

The opposition set up between Nick and Widmerpool makes Nick’s role as an author important. Widmerpool cuts vast swathes through the worlds of business, the military and politics, making his presence keenly felt, whilst Nick quietly and unassumingly takes to writing. As if to highlight the inconspicuous nature of Nick’s character, at one point towards the end of *The Acceptance World*, Nick and Widmerpool have one of the novels’ many chance meetings, and Widmerpool tells Nick, ‘Do you know, I nearly forgot your Christian name.’[343] Following this vague intention to write in the first volume, *A Buyer’s Market* sees that ‘this matter of writing was beginning to occupy an increasing amount of attention in my own mind. I had even toyed with the idea of attempting myself to begin work on a novel.’[344] These unpretentious inclinations, in a matter of fifty pages, give way to having actually written a book. No mention is made prior to this and it is only when he is asked by the clairvoyant Mrs Erdleigh that the reader is given the information:

> ‘You are musical?’
>
> ‘No’
>
> ‘Then you write – I think you have written a book?’
>
> ‘Yes.’[345]

Nick becomes a writer so surreptitiously, with the minimum of attention within his own narrative, that it is almost as if his being a writer is so integral to his character that it is hardly worth mentioning. Incidentally, we are never given a physical description of Nick which, again, contrasts him with some of the most vividly drawn characters, especially Widmer-

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[342] Anthony Powell, *A Question of Upbringing* in *Dance to the Music of Time*, *Volume I ‘Spring’* (London: Mandarin, 1997), p.134.
[343] Ibid, p.690.
[344] Ibid, p.476.
[345] Ibid, p.526.

pool, every encounter with whom awards the reader with a little more insight. For example, the occasion upon which he forgets Nick's name:

> He glared through his thick glasses, the side pieces of which were becoming increasingly embedded in wedges of fat below his temples. At the same time he transmitted one of those skull-like smiles of conventional friendliness to be generally associated with conviviality of a political sort. He was getting steadily fatter. His dinner-jacket no longer fitted him: perhaps it had never done so with much success.[346]

This astute and summative description contrasts with the inattentiveness of Widmerpool towards Nick. Although they are certainly not close friends they have many mutual acquaintances and yet, whilst Nick knows a great deal about Widmerpool's exploits, Widmerpool appears to know so little of Nick's:

> 'Still producing your art books? It was art books, wasn't it?'
>
> 'Yes – and I wrote a book myself.'
>
> 'Indeed Nicholas. What sort of a book?
>
> 'A novel, Kenneth.'
>
> 'Has it been published?'
>
> 'A few months ago.'
>
> 'Oh.'
>
> His ignorance of novels and what happened about them was evidently profound.[347]

[346] Ibid, p.689.
[347] Ibid, p.691.

This exchange highlights the importance of the juxtaposition between Nick and Widmerpool; unlike Widmerpool, intent on beating a path through life, Nick, as Robert K. Morris finds, 'keeps his distance, hangs in the background, more concerned with what is happening around him than to him.'[348] Powell presents Nick as incredibly ordinary: very much a blank page, in order that we might see him as 'an observer more than a participant.'[349] Nick's reticence, especially with regard to his private life, has been deemed self-effacing by several of Powell's critics,[350] although it corresponds to his vocation as a novelist and observer and also with what appears to have been Powell's design for the character. In *Messengers of the Day* (1978), the second volume of his memoirs, he discusses 'the principle that the Narrator of *A Dance*…should be a man who had shared some (though not necessarily all) of my own experiences.'[351] Powell is emphatic in his declarations he is *not* Nick although he does concede, as here, that he has given Nick some of his own experiences. Mark Facknitz however believes that 'Powell appears to encourage readers to confuse him with his narrator.'[352] It is clear that Powell has used Nick as a mouthpiece for voicing ideas and opinions. This can be seen in the comparison of two statements about the impact of war on the writer's life, one from his memoirs and one from the sixth volume of *Dance*, *The Kindly Ones*:

> Crisis was unremitting, cataclysm not long to be delayed.
>
> Such an atmosphere was not at all favourable to writing novels, the activity which chiefly occupied my own thoughts, one that may require from time to time some more or less powerful outside stimulus in the life of a writer, but

[348] Robert K. Morris, *The Novels of Anthony Powell* (Pittsburg: The University of Pittsburg Press, 1968), p.110.
[349] James Tucker, *The Novels of Anthony Powell* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1979), p.109.
[350] See especially Lynette Felber, 'The Politics of Neutrality: Representation and Ideology in "A Dance to the Music of Time,"' *Mosaic*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1992:Summer), pp.65-78; Nicholas Birns, *Understanding Anthony Powell* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2004); and Mark A. R. Facknitz, 'Self-Effacement as Revelation: Narration and Art in Anthony Powell's "A Dance to the Music of Time,"' *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Spring, 1989), pp. 519-529.
[351] Anthony Powell, *To Keep the Ball Rolling, Volume II: Messengers of the Day* (London: Heinemann, 1978), p.114.
[352] Mark A. R. Facknitz, 'Self-Effacement as Revelation: Narration and Art in Anthony Powell's "A Dance to the Music of Time",' *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Spring, 1989), p.521.

> needs, in between any such disturbances, long periods of comparative calm.[353]

A period of twenty years separate this extract from *A Dance*, to that below from the fourth volume of memoirs. The sentiments expressed are almost identical, although Nick's are more universal than Powell's as he reflects, through his own experiences, on the generalised figure of the writer which he represents. Powell's account is more specific and personal; he compares his reactions of WWII to other those of other writers':

> Drastic changes are by no means essential to a novelist. They can hinder as well as help. It is sometimes naively thought that novelists need to taste every cup…Certain writers continued to produce books throughout the war in spite of military or other employment. I found that impossible as much from disruption of inner machinery as from sheer lack of time.[354]

Powell's use of Nick as a mouthpiece, and his deployment of his own biography for Nick's, reduces the character to an almost empty shell, animated only by his perceptions of others. Powell himself, in his introduction to Hilary Spurling's handbook *Invitation to the Dance* (1977), expresses his intention 'that the narrator, Nicholas Jenkins, is merely a vehicle for expressing how people and happenings struck him during a period of some sixty years.'[355] Nick's status as a novelist is essential to the narrative in permitting him a certain degree of fluidity in terms of social position. He is from a background which is modest (an army family, like Powell's) when compared to his school friends, Templer and Stringham, both from affluent families, yet throughout *A Dance* he moves within the circles of high society as well as bohemian London, eventually marrying into a titled family as Powell did himself. His po-

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[353] Anthony Powell, *The Kindly Ones* in *Dance to the Music of Time, Volume II 'Summer'* (London: Mandarin, 1997), p.561.
[354] *The Strangers All Are Gone*, p.3.
[355] Anthony Powell, 'Introduction,' in Hilary Spurling, *Invitation to the Dance: A Handbook to Anthony Powell's A Dance to the Music of Time* (London: Arrow Books, 2005), p.vii.

sition as an author affords him a flexibility that is mirrored by the role he plays as narrator, 'a kind of protean softness that helps keep the cast of characters in flux.'[356] Nick's position as narrator is akin to that which Isherwood sees the writer of memoir as holding. In his essay on Stephen Spender's autobiography *World Within World* (1951), he distinguished between memoir and autobiography. Of the latter, Spender finds:

> Presents a central character to whom all other characters and all events are directly related, and by whose mind all experiences are subjectively judged. Memoirs, on the other hand, should ideally be written by an insignificant almost invisible observer, with the utmost possible objectivity.[357]

This definition resembles how many critics have seen Nick, as he follows in 'the steps just traced for Powell,'[358] which explains Powell's decision to use the model of his own biography to compose Nick's. To have given Nick an entirely separate identity would have invested him with too much autonomy to have convincingly played the role Powell had designated; the reader is intended to associate Nick with Powell to a degree, although Powell is careful to distinguish between them. This distinction is clearly expressed by Robert Selig, who observes that Powell's and Nick's life stories:

> Lack symmetry at one highly significant point…the novel avoids repeating the one most important event in all of Powell's life – the writing of *A Dance* itself. Although Jenkins narrates the twelve-volume work, nothing indicates that he has written it or anything else like it…Nick never speaks of his narrative as written. He is the teller of the story – not its author. Perhaps most re-

[356] Facknitz, p.520.
[357] Christopher Isherwood, *Exhumations: Stories, Articles, Verses* (London: Penguin, 1969), p.71.
[358] Christopher Hitchens, 'Powell's Way,' *The New York Review of Books* (May 28, 1998) http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1998/may/28/powells-way/?pagination=false accessed 04/03/13

> vealingly, the time of *A Dance*'s story line extends into the years when the author was writing the work and Heinemann was publishing it.[359]

This is arguably why, towards the end of the novel sequence, Powell supplements his use of Nick as a mouthpiece with that of another novelist-character, X. Trapnel. Trapnel appears in *Books Do Furnish a Room* (1971), the tenth volume, and he is as ostentatious as Nick is modest. Despite his death in between volumes ten and eleven, Powell gives Trapnel several long tracts of monologue throughout the final three novels in which he opines on various literary topics, the most pertinent of which, told as reminiscence by Nick, is on the relationship between fact and fiction:

> People think because a novel's invented, it isn't true. Exactly the reverse is the case. Because a novel's invented, it is true. Biography and memoirs can never be wholly true, since they can't include every conceivable circumstance of what happened. The novel can do that. The novelist himself lays it down. His decision is binding. The biographer, even at his highest and best, can be only tentative, empirical. The autobiographer, for his part, is imprisoned in his own egotism. He must always be suspect. In contrast with the other two, the novelist is a god, creating his man, making him breathe and walk. The man, created in his own image, provides information about the god. In a sense you know more about Balzac and Dickens from their novels, than Rousseau and Casanova from their Confessions.[360]

Powell freely admits in his memoirs that Trapnel is based on Julian Maclaren-Ross: 'in due course I took some liberties with the theatrically projected personality of Maclaren-Ross –

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[359] Robert L. Selig, *Time and Anthony Powell: A Critical Study* (London: Associated University Presses, 1991), pp.54-55.
[360] Anthony Powell, *Hearing Secret Harmonies* in *Dance to the Music of Time*, *Volume IV 'Winter'* (London: Arrow Books, 1999), p.614.

elaborating the scope a little – in constructing the character of X. Trapnel.'[361] This well-known association perhaps afforded Powell the liberty of using Trapnel to give voice to more strident opinions and didacticisms than he was accustomed to giving Nick, adhering to Trapnel's statement about truth, life and art. Trapnel's presence does more than simply give Powell an opportunity to declaim some colourful theories upon the modern novel; he demonstrates, in presenting to the reader his flamboyant persona, exactly how little we are permitted to know about Nick. Trapnel acts more like a mouthpiece than Nick in that he is formed around his philosophies: his character functions as a manifestation of his ideals. The same cannot be said of Nick; although as an embodiment of a writer-character he represents what we may perceive as Powell's ideals about how a writer should perform, he is not merely 'a convenient ventriloquist's dummy.' Neither is Christopher, if indeed he ever was truly intended as such; he certainly is not at the stage we see him in *Down There*. Like Nick he becomes abstracted into and through the narrative; through the process of writing he seems to write himself into the sidelines just as a previous incarnation of Christopher in *Goodbye to Berlin*, despite what Isherwood tells us his intentions are. This demonstrates not only how the writer interprets and shapes the reality he encounters, but also that his place in the text is manifold; the writer's status as observer and everyman ultimately acts to conceal him within the text as he becomes part of it. The position the narrator takes interacts with Isherwood's dichotomous conception of the Truly Weak and Truly Strong Man, of which Izzo writes:

> Although the Strong Man and Weak Man could be distinct individual personas, more often the Strong Man and Weak Man represented conflicting aspects with the same person. Isherwood's generation developed this mythos by emphasizing the conflicts of divided minds that anticipated the future of literary characterization ushered in by Auden's *Age of Anxiety* after World War

[361] *The Strangers All Are Gone*, p.6.

> II… The Truly Weak Man, exemplified by T. E. Lawrence, suffered from a compulsion to prove himself by seeking, confronting, and passing Tests of rebellious derring-do.[362]

The evolving roles performed by the Christopher characters within *Down There* demonstrate reconciliation between the self and the text: Christopher gradually comes to accept his place in the narrative – he no longer feels the need to prove himself and thus can be read as finally achieving the status of Truly Strong Man. Isherwood's notion was that only the 'Truly Weak cry for approval,'[363] their need for validation (through Tests) was a confirmation of this weakness. Isherwood's theory of the Truly Weak and Truly Strong Man interacts with the notion of the modern hero and antihero, extolling the antihero as the Truly Strong Man, who can accept his failings and feels no need to test himself. In this way the Truly Strong (and thus anti-heroic) nature of both Nick and the final incarnation of Christopher interrogate the notion of what it truly means to be a 'hero.'

[362] Izzo, pp.xvii-iii.
[363] Ibid, p.40.

III. 'SELF-DIVISIONS CAUSE'

An Attempt at Autobiographical Synthesis in Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* and W. Somerset Maugham's *Cakes and Ale*

> He supposed he must have written them in his sleep. It was all very disquieting. The days passed by; every morning a fresh instalment was added to the rapidly growing bulk of *Heartsease Fitzroy*. It was as though some goblin, some Lob-lie-by-the-fire, came each night to perform the appointed task, vanishing before the morning.[364]

The opening story, of Richard Greenow, in Huxley's first published collection of short fiction, *Limbo* (1920), underscores a theme that would dominate much of his early writing: self-division of the individual. The titular character discovers his spiritual hermaphroditism when the female part of him begins writing trashy romance novels while he sleeps. Huxley's portrait of Richard posits oppositional abilities such as 'austerely masculine 'intellectual' pursuits of algebra and mathematics, at which Dick excels…and the feminine 'aesthetic' pursuits of art and poetry.'[365] Dick is, at first, elated at the discovery of his alter-ego, as it not only provides a source of income on which he can live, he also believes the female presence explains certain feelings he had for another boy at school, to whom he wrote love poems. Huxley, however,

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[364] Aldous Huxley, 'The Farcical History of Richard Greenow,' in *Limbo* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), p.35.

[365] Erik Svarny, 'Gender, War and Writing in Aldous Huxley's Farcical History of Richard Greenow,' in ed., Angela K. Smith, *Gender and Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Textual Representations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.58.

has already preconditioned the reader to Dick's feminine tastes, describing in the opening pages his childhood interest in his sister's doll-house:

> One might go on talking about the doll's house for ever, it was so beautiful. Such, at any rate, was the opinion of Millicent's brother Dick. He would spend hours opening and shutting the front door, peeping through the windows, arranging and rearranging the furniture. As for Millicent, the gorgeous present left her cold.[366]

The suggestion Huxley makes is that Dick's denial of his feminine nature eventually prompts a schizophrenic episode, even though Dick seems happy with the initial arrangement – 'he would devote the day to the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, to philosophy and mathematics, with perhaps an occasional excursion into politics. After midnight he would write novels with a female pen.'[367] That he confines and represses his female persona, Pearl Bellairs, causes her to strike out at his intellectual and political ideals and, ultimately, means that neither persona can survive: they end up destroying each other.

This division and opposition within the self occupied Huxley's 1920s novels *Crome Yellow* (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923), *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), and culminated in the crescendo of *Point Counter Point* (1928), which took division as it major theme. The title of this section is taken from the epigraph to this novel, which in turn is taken from Fulke Greville's 'Chorus Sacerdotum' in *Mustapha* (1609); Huxley takes the concept of self-division as the 'wearisome condition of humanity,'[368] or 'the disease of modern man.'[369] However wearisome division of the self may be, it is exercised by both Huxley and Maugham in the autobiographical depiction of their major writer characters: Walter Bidlake and Philip Quarles in *Point Counter*

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[366] 'The Farcical History of Richard Greenow,' p.2.
[367] Ibid, p.38.
[368] Fulke Greville, 'Chorus Sacerdotum,' in *Selected Poems of Fulke Greville* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p.149.
[369] Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (London: Vintage, 2005), p.152.

Point and Maugham's trio of novelists William Ashenden, Alroy Kear and Edward Driffield in *Cakes and Ale* (1930). Maugham had previously attempted to create an autobiographical character in Philip Carey, the protagonist in *Of Human Bondage* (1915), but found, as his preface to *Cakes and Ale* states, 'I had not said all I wanted to say.'[370] Through the division of his writerly self into three characters Maugham was able to achieve a synthesis, a 'complete picture of himself.'[371] Huxley achieves a similar illustrative point by dividing himself between the novelist Quarles, to whom he gives his theories of novel writing, and Bidlake, who inherits some of his personal problems. In the composition of *Point Counter Point* Huxley used Bidlake's affair with Lucy Tantamount as a vehicle for exorcising the demon of his own affair with Nancy Cunard; his friend and biographer Sybille Bedford writes that 'he wrote it all down, Maria said, he wrote it all out; it was over. He never looked back.'[372] By contrast he uses Quarles and his notebooks as a medium for expressing his ideas about the novel-form, as well as a means of explanation of what *Point Counter Point* was attempting to achieve as a novel of ideas. The Quarles-Bidlake opposition also demonstrates Huxley's organising principle by illustrating the divided self at work within these two characters. Thus Huxley was able to devote lengthy paragraphs within the novel in which he set down his theories, whilst simultaneously using these tracts to demonstrate why such theories are important. For example, in this much quoted passage, Huxley espouses his own recommendations, explains why he has implemented them, and finally discusses the method and disadvantages of employing such a technique:

> Put a novelist into the novel. He justifies aesthetic generalizations, which may be interesting – at least to me. He also justifies experiment. Specimens of his work may illustrate other possible or impossible ways of telling a story. And

[370] W. Somerset Maugham, *Cakes and Ale* (London: Mandarin, 1995), p.2.
[371] W. Somerset Maugham, *The Summing Up* (London: Pan Books, 1976), p.124.
[372] Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography*, *Volume I 1894-1939* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975), p.138.

> if you have him telling parts of the same story as you are, you can make a variation on the theme…Novel of ideas. The character of each personage must be implied, as far as possible, in the ideas of which he is the mouthpiece. In so far as theories are rationalizations of sentiments, instincts, dispositions of the soul, this is feasible. The chief defect of the novel of ideas is that you must write about people who have ideas to express – which excludes all but about .01 per cent of the human race. Hence the real, the congenial novelists don't write such books. But then I never pretended to be a congenial novelist.[373]

Maugham makes similar pronouncements about his abilities as a novelist, especially in *The Summing Up* (1938), which is best described as a literary memoir as opposed to an autobiography. Maugham found that 'lack of imagination…obliged me to set down quite straightforwardly what I had seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears.'[374] He collected stories and experiences as raw materials for his fiction. *The Summing Up* is a setting down of himself on paper, in which he 'analysed his personality and outlined clearly his philosophic, religious, and artistic beliefs.'[375] In much the same way Huxley infiltrated his novels with his theories about how and why novels should be written. Considerable critical and public attention was given at the time of publication to *Cakes and Ale*'s depictions of Alroy Kear and Edward Driffield, reputed to be based upon Hugh Walpole and Thomas Hardy. Although Maugham later admitted (in a preface to the Modern Library edition of 1950) that Kear was indeed drawn largely from Walpole, he maintained that the characters were 'composite portraits with aspects borrowed from different individuals including himself.'[376]

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[373] *Point Counter Point*, pp.385-86.
[374] *The Summing Up*, pp.109-10.
[375] Richard A. Cordell, 'Somerset Maugham at Eighty,' *College English*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (January, 1954), p.201
[376] Anthony Curtis, *Somerset Maugham* (Windsor: Profile Books, 1982), p.35.

As with Powell's *A Dance*, for which the Anthony Powell society has an online 'Character Models' page,[377] both *Point Counter Point* and *Cakes and Ale* were known to contain caricatures of well-known persons from the authors' social circles. For example, John Middleton Murry, identifying himself in Huxley's Burlap, was 'more outraged…than he cared to admit. His first impulse had been to challenge Huxley to a duel.'[378] The best-known portrait in *Point Counter Point*, perhaps even more so than Huxley's own as Quarles, is the D. H. Lawrence figure Mark Rampion. It was intended as a respectful depiction of a dedicated friend although Lawrence was unhappy, writing to Huxley 'your Rampion is the most boring character in the book – a gasbag. Your attempt at intellectual sympathy! – It's all rather disgusting.'[379] Lawrence's accusation that Rampion is just a 'gasbag' stems from long tracts of didactic monologue; Huxley's intent was to present in Rampion, and his wife Mary, the only complete, fully synthesized characters in the novel. However this is precisely, as Peter Firchow points out in his essay 'The Music of Humanity,' why he fails as a character: 'to reassemble a personality in the realm of fiction one has to present it in action, not merely in contemplation or conversation… Rampion /Lawrence is dead (as a character) because he is fixed and finished when he enters the story. There is no more growth left in him.'[380] Rampion becomes, as Quarles notes, just a mouthpiece for the ideas which he represents, thus inadvertently addressing a common criticism of the novel of ideas: that it creates two-dimensional characters.

In addition to the well-known Kear/Walpole, Driffield/Hardy characters, Robert Calder recognises further society portraits within *Cakes and Ale*. These have attracted little attention comparatively, although Calder believes they are:

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[377] http://www.anthonypowell.org/home.php?page=M02 accessed 15/03/13
[378] F. A. Lea, *The Life of John Middleton Murry* (London: Butler and Tanner, 1960), p.249.
[379] 'D. H. Lawrence to Aldous Huxley, 28 October 1928' in, *The Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed., James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.413.
[380] Peter Firchow, 'The Music of Humanity: Point Counter Point,' in ed., Robert E. Kuehn, *Aldous Huxley: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p.115.

> Taken far more definitely than Driffield or Kear from actual figures well-known in the Edwardian literary-social scene. The lion-hunting Mrs Barton Trafford and her husband are undoubtedly thinly disguised representations of Mr and Mrs Sidney Colvin. Jasper Gibbons, the poet…is clearly the poet Stephen Phillips…the verbose, pompous critic, Allgood Newton, is Maugham's caricature of the critic and man of letters Sir Edmund Gosse.[381]

Although several of these portrayals are somewhat savage, Maugham is not simply out to revenge himself upon figures he dislikes. Maugham makes an explicit statement about the value of real life experience in fiction in Ashenden's criticism of Driffield's novels, which, after his first-wife Rosie leaves him, deteriorate in quality as they cease to make use of the stuff of every-day life. Maugham suggests this model for fiction through the mistaken ideology of Ashenden, who, when he first begins to write, reasons as follows:

> If the proper study of mankind is man it is evidently more sensible to occupy yourself with the coherent, substantial, and significant creatures of fiction than with the irrational and shadowy figures of real life.[382]

In later life however, Ashenden realises the error of this belief. In looking at one of Driffield's novels, *The Cup of Life*, he finds that this book, which was written in Blackstable at the time Ashenden first knew the couple and relates to a tragic event in their marriage, is the most compelling of all Driffield's works.

> *The Cup of Life*, though certainly not the most popular, is to my mind the most interesting. It has a cold ruthlessness that in all the sentimentality of English fiction strikes an original note. It is refreshing and astringent. It tastes of tart apples. It sets your teeth on edge, but it has a subtle, bitter-sweet sa-

[381] Robert Lorin Calder, *W. Somerset Maugham and the Quest for Freedom* (London: Heinemann, 1972), p.183.
[382] *Cakes and Ale*, p.141.

> vour that is very agreeable to the palate. Of all Driffield's books it is the only one I should have liked to have written.[383]

Although the association of Hardy and Driffield is well-established, several Maugham critics, including R. Barton Palmer, have found cause to believe that in Driffield Maugham created a character he feared he might become: one who 'outlives his talent to write.'[384] As he states in *Cakes and Ale* 'why writers should be more esteemed the older they grow, has long perplexed me.'[385] Driffield was a writer of, at best, modest talent, exactly as Maugham thought of himself. He only achieves the elevated status and recognition because his reputation was promoted by others, but his writing suffers because, 'like Maugham, Driffield writes well when he sticks to his own experience.'[386] The Kear character was also representative of elements of himself Maugham feared. In the letter he wrote in response to Walpole's protest, he attempts (with some irony) to pacify Walpole by reassuring him:

> I certainly never intended Alroy Kear to be a portrait of you. He is made up of a dozen people and the greater part of him is myself. There is more of me in him than of any writer I know. I suggest that if there is anything in him that you recognise it is because to a greater or lesser extent we are all the same.[387]

Although Maugham did later reveal his intension of lampooning Walpole, there is a degree of truth in what he reveals in connecting himself to Kear. Maugham is a writer, according to Palmer, 'whose urge to communicate artistic truth conflicted with and was finally overcome by a stronger desire for financial gain and popular acclaim.'[388] Many of Maugham's critics during his life, as well as after, failed to take him seriously as an artist because he strived

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[383] Ibid, p.151.
[384] R. Barton Palmer, 'Artists and Hacks: Maugham's "Cakes and Ale,"' *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Nov., 1981), p.57.
[385] *Cakes and Ale*, p.94.
[386] Palmer, 'Artists and Hacks,' p.57.
[387] Quoted in Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole: a biography* (London: Macmillan, 1952), p.317
[388] Palmer, p.54.

above all for popular success. In Maugham's own words, he had 'achieved so considerable a position on so little talent.'[389] Kear's project in writing about Driffield's life is similarly motivated and, steered by the firm hand of the second Mrs Driffield, will never be able to reveal the truth of his life, only a glossy portrait where the skeletons remain firmly in the closet. Therefore *Cakes and Ale*, whose subtitle is indeed 'the skeleton in the cupboard,' is the book as Kear could never have written it; the true story of Driffield and Rosie, through which Ashenden and Maugham contest the veneer which society has imposed upon the writer. As a character Ashenden acts both as a foil to Kear and also as an example of a writer who has been formed by his experiences; *Cakes and Ale* is as much his story as it is Driffield and Rosie's. This is why Maugham gives him a similar background to his own – growing up in Whitstable/Blackstable with his aunt and uncle, becoming a medical student while developing his writing – and so uses him to represent the other side of Maugham, that which is oppositional to Kear. The differences between Ashenden and Kear signify Maugham's inner struggle to reconcile the opposing notions of true art and popular appeal. Ashenden recognises his own mistakes and also in the snobbery he shows in his youth towards Driffield when he gives him money:

> He pressed a tiny packet into my hand and the train steamed off. When I opened it I found two half-crowns wrapped in a piece of toilet-paper. I blushed to the roots of my hair. I was glad enough to have an extra five shillings but the thought that Ted Driffield had dared to give me a tip filled me with rage and humiliation…he must see how impossible it was for a gentleman to accept a tip from someone who was practically a stranger.[390]

[389] *Cakes and Ale*, p.9.
[390] Ibid, p.73.

Ashenden's knowingly misguided social prejudices are matched against those of the people of Blackstable, whose opinion of Driffield does not change. Ashenden's youth partly excuses his initial perception, but society's view remains entrenched.

> 'You know we have an author living here,' he said.
>
> 'We're not very proud of him,' said the major. 'He's the son of old Miss Wolfe's bailiff, and he married a barmaid.'
>
> 'Can he write?' asked Mrs Encombe.
>
> 'You can tell at once he's not a gentleman,' said the curate, 'but when you consider the disadvantages he's had to struggle against it's rather remarkable that he should write as well as he does.'[391]

As discussed previously one of the most endemic qualities of the novelist-character is its social and class fluidity; being a writer necessitates living outside of and transcending usual class boundaries. Maugham however demonstrates how narrow-minded society can be. Anthony Curtis discusses this aspect of Maugham's work, finding that the contrast between the backgrounds of Kear and Driffield allowed Maugham to invest the latter 'with that mysterious, authentic, creative gift that Maugham always delighted to find flowering in unexpected places,'[392] paralleling social perceptions of Driffield's work with those of Dickens as well as Hardy. This is doubly important as it is the discrepancy of class between Kear and Driffield that lead Kear to want to cover up the low-class aspects of Driffield's life, thus showing himself to be bound by societal conventions, juxtaposed by Ashenden's conclusion that the writer

[391] Ibid, p.80.
[392] Anthony Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham: A Critical Portrait* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974), p.143.

'is the only free man.'[393] This verdict, with which the novel ends, arises from a lengthy interior monologue in which Ashenden reflects upon the writer's life:

> It is full of tribulation. First he must endure poverty and the world's indifference; then, having achieved a measure of success, he must submit with good grace to its hazards. He depends upon a fickle public. He is at the mercy of journalists who want to interview him, and photographers who want to take his picture, of editors who want to harry him for copy…of agents, of publishers, managers, bores, admirers, critics, and his own conscience. But he has one compensation. Whenever he has anything on his mind, whether it be a harassing reflection, grief at the death of a friend, unrequited love, wounded pride, anger at the treachery of someone to whom he has shown kindness, in short any emotion or any perplexing thought, he has only to put it down in black and white, using it as a theme of a story or the decoration of an essay, to forget all about it.[394]

Although Ashenden's statement represents a rather too neat and tidy notion of the writer's ability to utilise the stuff of his/her own life within art and the potentially therapeutic practice of writing, ultimately, as Curtis suggests, Maugham 'was endlessly fascinated not just by the creative process but by what happens to people who adopt it as a profession, and how it affects the private self.'[395] Through Ashenden Maugham reconciles himself with the writer's life and indicates ways in which writing can be put to cathartic use. *Cakes and Ale* acts a vehicle for doing just that – in writing from and about his past, Maugham could more fully own his future success as a writer. It posits the man and the writer side by side and shows how the two achieve a synthesis through which to feed each other. Huxley attempted a similar kind of

[393] *Cakes and Ale*, p.196.
[394] Ibid, pp.195-96.
[395] Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham*, p.149.

amalgam between his personal philosophy, as expressed in several volumes of essays and his fiction. In the earlier novel, *Those Barren Leaves,* Alexander Henderson finds 'the characters are in the habit of declaiming little essays on topics that have interested Huxley. We may even find in them repeating what Huxley has said in his own essays.'[396] We have already seen this at work in *Point Counter Point*, especially in the characters Rampion and Quarles, but Jerome Meckier illustrates the degree to which all the major characters are representative of varying aesthetic, philosophic or scientific attitudes and values, as he identifies:

> Walter Bidlake's Shelleyan idealism, Lord Edward's monistic biology, Illidge's Communism, Webley's Fascist tendencies, Spandrell's Baudelairean diabolism, John Bidlake's unadulterated sensualism, and Lucy Tantamount's amoral hedonism.[397]

Arguably much of the humour in Huxley's social satire derives from the characters so fully inhabiting these diverse and unpersuasive ideologies; however Huxley's characters represent a real failing of society to rebuild itself in a period of uncertainty. That despite a vast array of different theories none is equal to the task of guiding society, as Huxley believed artists and intellectuals should, demonstrates the importance of working together to achieve the harmony of ideas Huxley argues for in *Point Counter Point.* Quarles establishes this in his analysis of Rampion's theorizing as being merely 'the substitution of simple intellectual schemata for the complexities of reality.'[398] Quarles, unlike Rampion, is not presented as the idealised 'whole' man but he at least identifies the need for such unity. Earlier in the novel, during a discussion with his wife Elinor, he expresses that:

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[396] Alexander Henderson, *Aldous Huxley* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p.125.
[397] Jerome Meckier 'Aldous Huxley and the Congenital Novelists: New Ideas about the Novel of Ideas,' in ed., Jerome Meckier, *Critical Essays on Aldous Huxley* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1996), p.7.
[398] *Point Counter Point*, p.418.

> The essence of the new way of looking at things is multiplicity. Multiplicity of eyes and multiplicity of aspects seen…there's the biologist, the chemist, the physicist, the historian. Each sees, professionally, a different aspect of the event, a different layer of reality. What I want to do is to look with all those eyes at once.[399]

Similarly Huxley, though his rational intellectualising couldn't always see a solution, saw at least the need for one. As his biographer Nicholas Murray points out, Huxley the essayist was 'trying to reconcile the intellectual and the ideal with the practical realities of society.'[400] The same is attempted in the novels, especially from *Point Counter Point* onwards. *Point Counter Point*, we know, is intended explicitly as a novel of ideas because Quarles tells us so. Through Quarles Huxley enacts his philosophy of the novel, almost writing through him as a means of testing and proving his theories, remaining both a part of Quarles and also detached from him, as Henderson remarks, 'at every moment we are constantly aware of the ironic part of Huxley's self observing him as he writes.'[401] Just as Quarles acts as a mechanism to guide the reader through the principles of the novel's theory he also seems to guide Huxley through his writing of the novel.

The ironic detachment Henderson observes in Huxley's portrayal of himself as Quarles also extends to the character portraits he drew from his circle of friends and acquaintances. Murray and Frank Baldanza both see his use of real life as naïve, in that he fails to understand when friends, such as Ottoline Morrell, were upset by his portrayal of them. Lawrence wrote to Morrell, pacifying her by saying 'there's more than one self to everybody, and the Aldous that writes those novels is only one little Aldous among others – probably much nicer – that

[399] Ibid, p.251.
[400] Nicholas Murray, *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual* (London: Abacus, 2003), p.215.
[401] Henderson, p.114.

don't write novels.'[402] Baldanza believes that 'In such cases, he was concentrating on the structural and thematic function of such materials within the imaginative fiction; incidents drawn from one real person or situation were blended into an amalgam of materials drawn equally from quite different sources.'[403] Like Maugham, Huxley needed real life examples on which to build his fiction. In an interview with *The Paris Review* in 1960 he is asked whether he, like Philip Quarles, would say he is not a congenial novelist. He replies 'I don't think of myself as a congenial novelist—no. For example, I have great difficulty in inventing plots. Some people are born with an amazing gift for storytelling; it's a gift which I've never had at all.'[404] In *Point Counter Point* he unites dual aspects of himself as essayist and novelist, almost in lieu of plot, to drive the narrative; his satirical but measured look at the fragmentation of society allows him to employ the key elements of the novel of ideas, which, as Frederick Hoffman writes was 'a narrative form peculiar to an "unstable" age;'[405] Huxley's novel of ideas was a test of how his theories might shape reality. As discussed in the previous section, the confusion and uncertainty of the interwar years incited writers to use their work for social purposes in an attempt to make sense of the period. Huxley, although a decade older than the Auden generation, was equally caught up in the spirit of the age. The satire and society sketches in *Point Counter Point* were not so far from reality, remaining true to the zeitgeist, as Edwin Bergum writes 'life was too distorted to require the distortion of art. His portraits were transcriptions of what everybody saw but could not write, and gave the satisfaction of the roman a clef in every gesture and conversation.'[406] The ability to see the flaws but inability to act in order to resolve them distances the writer from society and through Quarles, Hux-

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[402] Letter from DHL to Ottoline Morrell, 5 February 1929 in *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed., Aldous Huxley (London: Heinemann, 1932), p.164.
[403] Frank Baldanza, 'Huxley and Hearst,' in Meckier, p.152.
[404] Aldous Huxley Interview, 'The Art of Fiction No.24,' The Paris Review, Spring 1960, no.23. http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4698/the-art-of-fiction-no-24-aldous-huxley - accessed 18/03/13
[405] Frederick J. Hoffman, 'Aldous Huxley and the Novel of Ideas,' *College English*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Dec., 1946), p.132.
[406] Edwin Berry Burgum, 'Aldous Huxley and His Dying Swan,' *The Antioch Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1942), p.68.

ley evokes the isolation of the writer – 'all his life long he had walked in a solitude, in a private void, into which nobody, not his mother, not his friends, not his lovers had ever been permitted to enter.'[407] The reflections Quarles makes upon conversation with Rampion show his understanding of the need for unity but ultimately display that he will never achieve it himself:

> But always, whatever he might do, he knew quite well in the secret depths of his being that he wasn't a Catholic, or a strenuous liver, or a mystic, or a noble savage.[408]

He remains, as Meckier says, 'a split man who has made an entire world out of only half of himself.'[409] But this is ultimately illustrative of Huxley's intention for the novel; Quarles is only a fragment of a person, as he is only part of Huxley, and through their partially shared identity we see Huxley's attempt to stand outside of himself, demonstrating the need for synthesis: it is his commentary upon the novel and, as Robert Kuehn says, his way of making clear 'mere art was never enough,'[410] both for Huxley as a writer and for society as a whole.

Ultimately, Quarles's theorising on the novel form and on the world at large are rendered meaningless by his inaction in the 'real world': he distances himself from the day-to-day, neglecting his wife and son, with the result that Elinor considers an affair with the politically corrupt Everard Webley and his son, little Phil, dies of meningitis. His success as a novelist is undermined by these personal failures, forcing us to challenge the true value of literature for society. Huxley's own self-division into the characters of Quarles and Bidlake is reflected in Quarles's division between thought and action – his theories of the novel are undermined by his impotence in the real world of his family life – which questions the cost of his renown and

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[407] *Point Counter Point*, p.97
[408] Ibid, p.255.
[409] Jerome Meckier, *Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), p.30.
[410] Robert E. Kuehn, 'Introduction,' in Kuehn, p.5.

prosperity as a novelist. Maugham's self-division of his writerly self into three distinct novelist-characters, on the other hand, allowed him to reconcile himself with his vocation. Kear, Driffield, and Ashenden all represent aspects of Maugham's own persona: he feared both outliving his own talent, like Driffield, and being seen as a hack like Kear, whilst Ashenden's character emphasises the importance of truth and past experience for the novelist. Kear's narrative, which has attempted to gloss over the reality (the skeletons in the cupboard), fails to truly capture Driffield's genius, whilst Ashenden's succeeds because he comes to understand that it was precisely this unseemly past which made Driffield a great writer. The diverse novelist-characters in both novels express the multiple selves contained within the figure of the novelist and the importance in accepting the different aspects of the writerly persona. Quarles failure to do so, in spite of his outwards renown and prosperity as a novelist, mark him as an ultimately unsuccessful – as one of the earliest key examples of the novelist-character his portrayal is amongst the most cynical. Ashenden, perhaps largely because of his comparisons to Kear, but also of his ability to accept both Driffield's and his own past, is presented in a much more positive light.

IV.'WRITTEN OUT'

Writing, Illness, and Catharsis in Evelyn Waugh's *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* and Muriel Spark's *The Comforters*

> Writing is a form of therapy; sometime I wonder how all those who do not write, compose or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation.[411]

This final section of the chapter turns to an analysis of ways in which two writers have transfigured traumatising episodes from their own lives into fiction, with a view to exorcizing painful experience. Both Evelyn Waugh's *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* and Muriel Spark's *The Comforters* were published in 1957; both deal with novelist-protagonists who experience psychotic episodes, in which they hear voices persecuting them, drawn from events in the authors' own lives. They also both end with the protagonist sitting down to write the narrative we have just read, indeed Douglas Lane Patey holds that Waugh, who had read and admired the proof of Spark's novel, 'was probably inspired by Muriel Spark's first novel, *The Comforters*…Waugh added *Pinfold's* ending only after reading Spark.'[412] Both novelists are also Catholic converts, Spark having only recently converted when she wrote *The Comforters*, something most of her critics (as well as Spark herself) believed instrumental in her career as a novelist. Graham Greene's identification of writing with therapy perhaps touches on a significant aspect of Catholic authorship: the importance of writing confession as cathartic practice. Whilst enquiry into the religious aspect of confession in writing fiction is outside the

[411] Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (London: Vintage, 2002), p.275
[412] Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p.339.

parameters of this thesis, the notion of catharsis in authorial creation does merit examination. Aesthetic catharsis connotes 'a purgation or purification of emotional states,'[413] and originates in Aristotle's *Poetics*, where it is used to describe the effect of tragedy (within the dramatic arts) upon the audience. In *Catharsis in Literature* (1985), Adnan K. Abdulla traces the changing meaning of catharsis, finding that:

> In the Romantic period, both literature and criticism made the poet the center of imaginative activity. Consequently, for the first time in the history of literary criticism we hear of the "author's catharsis." The poet relieves his tension by writing out his worries…in most cases, the Romantics thought that art basically served as a means of personal therapy.[414]

Abdulla here uses the terms 'catharsis' and 'therapy' interchangeably, as he follows the evolution of the term 'author-catharsis' to T. S. Eliot's *Tradition and The Individual Talent* (1920), where he identifies this notion in Eliot's statement that 'poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.'[415] Arguably, looking at author-catharsis in this way, reveals the notion of writing as therapy and even as the 'writing cure,' which developed from what Bertha Pappenheim, better known as Anna O, termed the 'talking cure.' In psychoanalysis the case for the 'writing cure' has been presented by Mark Bracher in *The Writing Cure: Psychoanalysis, Composition and the Aims of Education* (1999) and by Stephen Lepore and Joshua Smyth's 2002 *The Writing Cure: How Expressive Writing Promotes Health and Emotional Well-Being*; its basic tenet is that (creative) writing can be used as a form of therapy in which the writing down of emotions can alleviate a wide range of medical conditions, both physical and

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[413] Alan Paskow, 'What Is Aesthetic Catharsis?' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Autumn, 1983), p.59.
[414] Adnan K. Abdulla, *Catharsis in Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p.19.
[415] T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), pp.48-9.

mental. Of course writing as therapy is not a new concept, neither is the relationship between writing and mental illness. Traditional associations between madness and artistic creativity exist in 'ancient ideas of the poetic frenzy of the rhapsode, in the figure of the prophet, in the myth of the mad artist, in the notion of the writing cure.'[416] For example, Liz Burns discusses specific writers, such as Virginia Woolf, finding that:

> The coincidence of literary inspiration and mental distress has a long history. Many writers…have lived simultaneously with outstanding creativity and profound mental distress. The nature of the relationship between disposition and artistic productions…is often characterised by an urge and search for self, a struggle (sometimes mortal) for survival and expression.[417]

Expelling an episode of mental disturbance by fictionalising the actual events has a basis of justification within the notion of the writing cure. Waugh was only too happy to admit that the story of *Pinfold* was explicitly based upon his own breakdown, announcing 'at a Foyles literary luncheon on the day of publication: 'Three years ago I had quite a new experience. I went off my head for about three weeks.''[418] Spark, on the other hand, although it is evident that she used her own experiences as a basis for those suffered by her protagonist Caroline Rose, 'stated that the novel is not about her own breakdown and illness.'[419] Spark uses her breakdown as inspiration for her novel, making it into a part of Caroline's story as a parable for exploring the relationship between artistic creation and reality. Waugh makes a more explicit use of his trauma in *Pinfold* in that his narrative sticks very closely to the established facts of his illness, openly inviting readers to directly compare him to the titular character. Arguably the circular ending to *Pinfold* demonstrates the importance of purging, purifying

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[416] **ed.,** Corinne Saunders and Jane Macnaughton, *Madness and Creativity in Literature and Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.2.
[417] Liz Burns, *Literature and Therapy: A Systematic View* (London: Karnac, 2009), p.105.
[418] Patey, p.339.
[419] Valerie Shaw, 'Fun and Games with Life-stories,' in ed., Alan Bold, *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity of Vision* (London: Vision, 1984), p.49.

and clarifying Waugh's experiences, which Martin Stannard calls 'a form of exorcism.'[420] The novel ends with Pinfold sitting down at his desk and deciding not to finish the novel he had been working on, but to begin afresh with a new story:

> He took out the pile of manuscript, his unfinished novel, from the drawer and glanced through it. The story was still clear in his mind. He knew what had to be done. But there was more urgent business first, a hamper to be unpacked of fresh, ripe experiences – perishable goods.
>
> He returned the manuscript to the drawer, spread quite a new quire of fools-cap before him and wrote in his neat, steady hand:
>
> The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold
>
> A Conversation Piece
>
> Chapter One
>
> Portrait of the Artist in Middle-age.[421]

This mirrors Waugh's composition of *Pinfold*, in between *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955) and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961), the second and third volumes of his *A Sword of Honour Trilogy*. As David Wykes asserts, with this ending he 'put the serpent's tale in its mouth, to give the book the most visible shape of completion possible. The experience was finished, encapsulated.'[422] The validity of Waugh's belief in this action may be evinced in the fact that the attack from which he suffered, upon which *Pinfold* was based, did not recur. Admittedly this was, in no small part, down to the discovery of the cause of Waugh's auditory hallucinations as being a now well-documented 'reckless combining of alcohol, bromide and chlo-

[420] ed., Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p.47.
[421] Evelyn Waugh, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (London: Penguin, 2006), p.132.
[422] David Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p.191.

ral.'[423] However for Waugh it was also symbolic: the self-reflective structure he gave the novel represented the value he placed upon his own introspection. Many of his biographers and critics – especially Frederick Stopp, Martin Stannard, Jeffrey Heath, Gene Philips and Michael Brennan – have remarked that *Pinfold* acts to strip away the almost mythological persona Waugh had created for himself throughout his career; Alan Pryce-Jones, for example, discusses how 'in order to write, Evelyn had to build a persona for himself utterly unlike that with which he had been born; he had to protect himself against demons – not only hallucinatory demons which harassed Gilbert Pinfold, but enemies implanted by heredity and environment.'[424] This is similarly expressed in the novel:

> He was neither a scholar not a regular soldier; the part for which he cast himself was a combination of eccentric don and testy colonel and he acted it strenuously, before his children and Lychpole and his cronies in London, until it came to dominate his whole outward personality.[425]

The revealing and irrefutably unfavourable self-portrait that Waugh draws of himself in Pinfold is suggested as a correction to the personas Waugh had adopted and evolved at various times in his life and, as such, can be seen as an allegory for remaining true to oneself and the dangers of retreating from the world:

> It sometimes occurred to Mr Pinfold that he must be growing into a bore. His opinions certainly were easily predictable.
>
> His strongest tastes were negative. He abhorred plastics, Picasso, sunbathing and jazz – everything in fact that had happened in his own lifetime. The tiny kindling of charity which came to him through religion suffered only to tem-

[423] William H. Pritchard, 'Total Waugh,' *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer, 1993), p.387.
[424] Alan Pryce-Jones, 'Escape from Golders Green,' in ed., David Pryce-Jones, *Evelyn Waugh and His World* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973), p.13.
[425] *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, p.10.

> per his disgust and change it to boredom…he wished no one ill, but he looked at the world *sub specie aeternitatis* and he found it flat as a map…he had become lazy…he ate less, drank more, and grew corpulent.[426]

It suggests that the writer, having distanced himself from the rest of society in his ivory tower, places himself in danger of succumbing to the sinister machinations of his own mind; the voices that torment Pinfold are, according to R. Neill Johnson, 'externalizations of his own self-hatred. They represent the fantasy space where Pinfold stages the real of his self-loathing in a manner that is symbolic and potentially therapeutic.'[427] Undoubtedly Waugh was playful in turning his own story into an autobiographical narrative, intending, as Patey states, that readers might speculate (misguidedly) as to what the psychosis evoked, suggestions including 'a parable of the barbarian within; of religious loss and regeneration; and of the fragile and dangerous processes of literary creation.'[428] He even renames the ship he took to Ceylon *Caliban* to hint at the idea of barbarism, using the ship itself as a microcosm for the contemporary world of which he disproves. It may also be seen as representing the unknown within, the madness inherent in the writer's imagination. Both Patey and Heath hold that Waugh's mania had been inevitable long before the events that inspired *Pinfold*, Heath describing how these 'hallucinations had been incubating for many years,'[429] mostly as a result of his drinking and the combination of prescription medication he habitually took. There are many references within *Pinfold* that reflect this intake, such as:

> Dr Drake again advocated a warm climate and prescribed some pills which he said were 'something new and pretty powerful'…Mr Pinfold added them to

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[426] Ibid, pp.9-11.
[427] R. Neill Johnson, 'Shadowed by the Gaze: Evelyn Waugh's "Vile Bodies" and "The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold"' *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (January, 1996), p.17.
[428] Patey, p.339.
[429] Jeffrey Heath, *The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queens University Press, 1982), p.259.

> his bromide and chloral and Crème de Menthe, his wine and gin and brandy, and to a new sleeping-draught.[430]

In much the same way as Pinfold, Waugh recounts how, in a letter to Robert Henriques dated August 15th 1957, the voices he heard 'ceased as soon as I was intellectually convinced they were imaginary.'[431] The difficulty both Waugh and Pinfold suffered was in believing that the voices emanated from within themselves, perhaps due to some analogy drawn between the fine lines in creating fictional settings and characters and having these powers of imagination and mental agility turned against you. From on board his ship, the *Staffordshire*, Waugh had written to his wife expressing 'it is a huge relief to realize that I am merely the victim of the malice of others, not mad myself.'[432] It is interesting to note that Waugh (as well as Pinfold) found it both easier and more palatable to believe that other people would want to so viciously persecute him than to admit that it is a part of himself. As Heath writes, he had to learn 'that the evils of the outside world have their counterparts within, and that no amount of privacy can fence them out.'[433] The account of the realisation that leads to Pinfold's release from the tyranny of the voices only comes when his wife explicitly tells him that they aren't real:

> 'My poor darling,' said Mrs Pinfold, 'no one's "worked" anything. You're imagining it all'[…]
>
> 'You mean that everything I've heard said, I've been saying to myself? It's hardly conceivable'[…]
>
> Mr Pinfold sat in the silence. There had been other occasions of seeming release which had proved illusory. This he knew was the final truth. He was alone with his wife.

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[430] *Pinfold*, p.19.
[431] ed., Mark Amory, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Pheonix, 2009), p.560.
[432] Ibid, p.477.
[433] Heath, p.263.

> ‘They’ve gone,’ he said at length. ‘In that minute. Gone for good.’[434]

Waugh presents Pinfold’s comprehension of the truth as instrumental in dispersing the voices. They disappear very suddenly and subtly and the whole experience is later glossed over by Dr Drake, who asks:

> ‘Those voices were pretty offensive, I suppose?’
>
> ‘Abominably. How did you know?’
>
> ‘They always are. Lots of people hear voices from time to time – nearly always offensive.’
>
> ‘You don’t think he ought to see a psychologist?’ asked Mrs Pinfold.
>
> ‘He can if he likes, of course, but it sounds like a perfectly simple case of poisoning to me.’
>
> ‘That’s a relief,’ said Mrs Pinfold, but Mr Pinfold accepted this diagnosis less eagerly. He knew, and the others did not know, – not even his wife, least of all his medical adviser, – that he had endured a great ordeal and, unaided, had emerged the victor.[435]

Selina Hastings writes that ‘far from being embarrassed by his breakdown, Evelyn was exhilarated, and talked of it freely, no doubt relieved that the cause was judged to be purely physical and external…as well, he was delighted at having a new subject for a novel.’[436] Many of the reviewers of *Pinfold* were surprised by the self-revelation evident in the novel; Philip Toynbee for example, writing in the *Observer*, called it ‘remarkably honest.’[437] Johnson however reminds us that ‘one should not assume that the novel merely documents Waugh’s

[434] *Pinfold*, pp.128-29.
[435] Ibid, p.131.
[436] Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (London: Minerva, 1995), p.565.
[437] Philip Toynbee, *Observer*, 21 July 1957 quoted in Stannard ed., *Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage*, p.387.

experiences.'[438] Indeed, despite the overtly autobiographical trajectory of the narrative and Waugh's own acknowledgements of the validity of this reading he still chose to write it as fiction, as opposed to out-and-out autobiography. His intention in doing so may be partially expounded in the desire for purgation and in imposing shape and structure upon the raw material by moulding it into fiction. He is also able to make an example of his experiences, forming a parable about the writer's need for the outside world and also as a comfort to 'the great number of sane people [who] suffer in this way from time to time,'[439] as mentioned in the unsigned 'Note' to early editions of the novel. Johnson points to the disingenuous nature of this unsigned prefatory note at the beginning of the book, missing from modern editions, in saying 'he may have decided that since readers would draw biographical parallels anyway, he would entertain their suspicions with a vengeance.'[440] This would explain the somewhat flippant manner in which Pinfold's illness is dismissed by his doctor – Waugh was making light of the situation, allowing only a carefully abridged and limited version into the public domain. Even if this was the case, it has been evidenced by various biographies the persecution mania that had haunted much of Waugh's life stopped after this period. Michael Brennan sums up his account of this episode by saying 'writing *Pinfold*, then, had proved a crucial psychological purgation and literary restorative, enabling Evelyn to move on from a peculiarly challenging and unhappy period.'[441]

Stannard, in a discussion of the similarities between Waugh and Spark's illnesses tells us 'Evelyn Waugh coped with his illness by writing it up as *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*. Muriel was doing much the same thing with *The Comforters*.'[442] Spark's illness differed from Waugh's in a few significant ways but it was also caused by medication, in this case Dexedrine. Rather than Waugh's voices Spark had visual hallucinations in which, perhaps fittingly

[438] Johnson, p.16.
[439] *Pinfold*, p.1.
[440] Johnson, p.16.
[441] Michael G. Brennan, *Evelyn Waugh: Fictions, Faith and Family* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.114.
[442] Stannard, *Muriel Spark*, p.164.

for a writer, words rearranged themselves into perceived messages. In her autobiography *Curriculum Vitae* (1992) Spark details these; interestingly, unlike Waugh, she realised almost at once that they were hallucinations:

> Foolishly, I had been taking dexedrine as an appetite suppressant, so that I would feel less hungry. It was a mad idea.
>
> As I worked on the Eliot book one night the letters of the words I was reading became confused. They formed anagrams and crosswords. In a way, as long as this sensation lasted, I knew they were hallucinations. But I didn't connect them with the dexedrine. It is difficult to convey how absolutely fascinating that involuntary word-game was. I thought at first that there was a code built into Eliot's work and tried to decipher it. Next I seemed to realize that this word-game went through other books by other authors…this experience lasted from 25 January to 22 April 1954.[443]

Like Pinfold, who maintains that his ordeal 'was exciting…it was the most exciting thing really, that ever happened to me,'[444] Spark too seems captivated by the processes of her own breakdown. The account in Stannard's biography is slightly darker: he writes 'T. S. Eliot, she insisted, was sending her threatening messages.'[445] Although Spark states that she knew they were hallucinations, Stannard finds that she was unable 'to distinguish inside from outside, fact from fiction, which was at once terrifying and stimulating.'[446] It is this aspect of her illness and her own fascination with the fact/fiction dichotomy, rather than the fictionalised autobiographical events Waugh remakes in *Pinfold,* that Spark uses as raw material for Caroline's breakdown in *The Comforters*. Caroline, like Waugh and Pinfold, hears voices – spe-

[443] Muriel Spark, *Curriculum Vitae: A Volume of Autobiography* (Manchester: Carcarnet, 2009), p.204.
[444] *Pinfold*, p.130.
[445] Stannard, *Muriel Spark*, p.151,
[446] Ibid, p.169.

cifically a 'Typing Ghost.'[447] At first she too is divided between what she initially believes the voices are and then what she fears they mean:

> While the thought terrified her that she was being haunted by people – spirits or things – beings who had read her thoughts, perhaps who could read her very heart, she could not hope for the horrible alternative. She feared it more; she feared that those sounds, so real that they seemed to have come from the other side of the wall, were hallucinations sent forth from her own mind.[448]

Similarly to Waugh and Pinfold, who would rather believe they are being persecuted by unknown assailants than admit that the voices come from with, Caroline dreads the idea that the voices are internal. As the plot develops she comes to understand that what she hears is the narration of her own actions, along with the noise of a typewriter: she realises that she is a character in a novel. But because Caroline *is* a character in a novel is she actually mad, or merely more self-aware than most fictional characters? This is the game the novel self-consciously plays with the reader and many critics have traced Spark's interest in this aspect of fiction to her Catholicism. In 'The House of Fiction' (1963) interview with Frank Kermode she says 'I don't claim that my novels are truth – I claim that they are fiction, out of which a kind of truth emerges. And I keep in my mind specifically that what I am writing is fiction because I am interested in truth – absolute truth,'[449] complementing an earlier statement that 'fiction to me is a kind of parable. You have got to make up your mind it's not true. Some kind of truth emerges from it, but it's not fact.'[450]

Spark's attitude towards the novel form is bound up in her ideas about religion and God's place as the only true creator, indeed many of her novels, especially *Memento Mori* (1959)

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[447] Spark, *The Comforters*, p.161.
[448] Ibid, p.44.
[449] Frank Kermode, 'The House of Fiction,' *Partisan Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 1 (Spring, 1963), p.80.
[450] Muriel Spark, 'My Conversion,' *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. CLXX, No. 1011 (Autumn, 1961), p.63.

and *Loitering With Intent* (1981), have this preoccupation in common with *The Comforters*. As an admirer and scholar of Cardinal John Henry Newman she was familiar with the motto *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem* – out from shadows and phantasms to the truth – and applied this to her own methodology of fiction. Ruth Whittaker explains that the link between writing fiction and religion in her work depended on the fact that 'for Mrs Spark reality lies not in the novel nor in the everyday world, but in the realm of God. By sabotaging her own creation of an autonomous, fictional world she endorses her view of God as omniscient author.'[451] In her autobiography Spark writes 'on I May 1954 I was received into the Church at Ealing Priory.'[452] Her Catholic conversion followed only eight days after the self-pronounced end of her illness: she acknowledges in 'My Conversion' that she believes 'there is a connection between my writing and my conversion…It [*The Comforters*] was not about my illness, it was about hearing voices, but suddenly I found I could write, things were taking shape as if there had been a complete reorganization of my mind.'[453] Although Spark explicitly states here that *The Comforters* was not about her illness, by the publication of her autobiography, over thirty years later, she somewhat revised this account: 'I had fixed upon, to write a novel about my recent brief but extremely intense word-game experience.'[454] Previously a poet, critic, and biographer, Spark was commissioned to write a novel by Macmillan on the strength of *The Seraph and the Zambesi*, which won the *Observer* short story prize in 1951. Caroline shares much of her biographical background with Spark; as Peter Kemp points out 'she has, we are told, spent time in Africa, lived by writing free-lance criticism, is of partly Jewish decent, and has become converted to Catholicism. All these are equally true of Mrs Spark.'[455] Spark's motivation is surely therapeutic here – she invests much of her own back-story in Caroline in an attempt to impose a sense of order and clarity upon her own life. One

[451] Ruth Whittaker, *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p.11.
[452] Spark, *Curriculum Vitae*, pp.202-03.
[453] Spark, 'My Conversion,' pp.59-60.
[454] *Curriculum Vitae*, p.205.
[455] Peter Kemp, *Muriel Spark* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), p.26-7.

suggestion is that she felt her life, up until the point of her conversion, had been misguided and shapeless; the conversion and its resonance within her fiction necessitated that she make use of her own story within the construction of Caroline, so that it would not be wasted and thus adhering to her religious beliefs that 'everything, no matter how contingent it appears, is ultimately part of a coherent whole, subject finally to a controlling force.'[456] This is suggested by the circularity of the narrative and the incident at the end of the book, where Laurence finds Caroline's notes for the novel left in her flat and wonders:

> Why did you leave them behind? What's the point of making notes if you don't use them while you are writing the book?[457]

The ending makes clear, with the appearance in the narrative of the letter Laurence writes and tears up, that the book Caroline goes away to write is the one we have just finished reading. The notes Caroline makes are akin to the life Spark lived: significant but ultimately useful only as a guideline, discarded in order that 'the act of writing…must break from the husk of whatever preconceptions, hopes and expectations she may have entertained…the process of writing, if it is a real engagement with the work, will change her. In creating we partly create ourselves…writing here is a metaphor for living.'[458] In a similar way to Huxley's use of self-division in *Point Counter Point*, Spark uses her own experiences in order to make a statement about the interplay between fiction and reality and the implications of this for the novel. Her aim is to lay the workings of the novel bare, to hold up a mirror to the processes of writing 'by making no secret of its own fictionality.'[459] Spark makes this design explicit in the novel by expressing Caroline's confusion and explaining how she will become unclouded:

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[456] Ibid, p.27.
[457] *The Comforters*, p.203.
[458] Bernard Harrison, *Inconvenient Fictions: Literature and the Limits of Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p.164.
[459] Norman Page, *Muriel Spark* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p.11.

> Caroline found the true facts everywhere beclouded. She was aware that the book in which she was involved was still in progress…her sense of being written into the novel was painful. Of her constant influence of its course she remained unaware and now she was impatient for the story to come to an end, knowing that the narrative could never become coherent to her until she was at last outside it, and at the same time lay consummately inside it.[460]

Giving Caroline her own biography, as Bryan Cheyette reasons, 'allowed Spark to view her life as a narrative and thus become her own Typing Ghost. This external perspective enabled Spark to imagine her life-story as endlessly pliable, in clear conflict with the religious view of conversion which splits the subject into old and new, before and after.'[461] The treatment of her life-before-conversion within *The Comforters* is not, as Cheyette says, at odds with its pliability; instead, it is precisely because she reworks her 'old' life that she is able to leave it behind, to exorcize it by imposing a form upon its seeming discord. *The Comforters* is not an autobiographical novel in the same way that *Pinfold* is, but it makes use of autobiographical detail to achieve its aims of exploring what Marina MacKay identifies as 'parallel existences'[462] within the character of Caroline but also between Spark and Caroline. The novel's figuring of biographical material also allows Spark to engage with and interrogate issues significant to her as a novelist, but also equally prevalent to the novel form, particularly the notion of authorial omnipotence; addressing the relationship of art and reality; demonstrating a pattern of life through art; and, finally, confronting the problem of telling truth through fiction. Spark's Caroline is compelled to outwrite her typing ghost in order to regain control over her own life and ultimately, her narrative; similarly Pinfold writes to encapsulate and thus consolidate his experience, leaving behind a difficult episode. Both characters 'write out' their trau-

[460] *The Comforters*, pp.180-81.
[461] Bryan Cheyette, *Muriel Spark* (London: Northcote House Publishers, 2000), p.23.
[462] Marina Mackay, 'Muriel Spark and the Meaning of Treason,' in ed., Herman, *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, p.110.

mas but they also write back in retaliation: this represents not only a cathartic function of fiction, but also suggests its ability to empower.

V. CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the autobiographical novels of six authors, all of whom employ a novelist-character who deliberately and explicitly shares, to a greater or lesser extent, some of the same biographical details. Although many of the novelist-characters analysed in subsequent chapters have also been given aspects of their creators' own lives,[463] the novelist-characters looked here all display a particular purpose both in terms of their role as novelists within the novel and as autobiographical characters. In novels where the protagonist is a novelist the reader may presume that the character will have much in common with the novelist who has created him/her. A novelist who creates a novelist-character is perhaps, to some extent, reacting to this limited biographical criticism, in which it is automatically assumed that a protagonist is in some way modelled upon the writer themselves. In writing a character who shares a similar biography but also the same vocation, writers pre-empt this critical commentary in order that the autobiographical nature of the text does not detract from the work as a whole. By purposefully designating the character as autobiographical, the author can take ownership of how the character is interpreted. By removing any ambiguity that a character is indeed intended as an autobiographical representation the author ensures that a reading of the text is not reduced to speculation on the issue of whether or not it is autobiographical.

[463] As discussed over the two following chapters: Amis gives his initials to Mark Asprey, and Durrell to his narrator Darley; Anna Wulf shares a similar biography – a life in Africa, being a divorced single parent – with Lessing; Amis states that he uses the 'Martin Amis' character in order that reader's do no associate him with the protagonist, John Self; Greene uses elements of his own affair with Catherine Walston in Bendrix's affair with Sarah; Wilson lends Margaret his histrionic family; and Coe gives jumbled versions of his own novels' titles to Michael's novels.

The beginning of the chapter quoted Powell's memoirs, in which he states 'all writers, one way or another, depend ultimately on their own lives for the material of their books.'[464] The importance of the relationship between the novel and reality, as discussed in the previous chapters, makes the autobiographical aspects seen in these novelist-characters particularly relevant. In both Spark and Waugh's novels difficult personal events are employed both for cathartic purposes but also to demonstrate the use of personal experience as a raw material for inspiring and shaping fiction; the representation of this process within the novel becomes a metaphor for the interplay between real life and the fiction, but it also suggests that these authors have sought to bring together elements of the real, biographical self and the authorial self through writing about themselves as writers. Seeing these two (or more) selves as separate, and the apparent desire to bring them together, interacts with a theme which has become evident in the previous chapters – of the novelist figure as being composed of multiple conflicting impressions. The various historical and theoretical interpretations of the novelist figure, as discussed in Chapters One and Two, have resulted in ambiguous portraits of the novelist.

The professed autobiographical nature of the novelist-characters establishes a degree of authenticity and self-reflection in the replication of the novelist-character's writing habits; their attitudes to writing as well as towards the role of the novelist, or of the novel; and the role they see the novelist as performing, within the novel as well as in society. Making the novelist-character into an autobiographical creation also demonstrates that the novelist is not above being a target for their own scrutiny: Huxley and Maugham were reproached (by friends and adversaries alike) for the too-recognisable society portraits which appeared in *Point Counter Point* and *Cakes and Ale*. However the main subject of criticism in both novels are the novelist-characters who bear distinct resemblances to their own creators. As well as providing

[464] *The Strangers All Are Gone*, p.14.

shape and verisimilitude, the autobiographic component of the novels looked at in this chapter all express aspects of how the authors discussed regard their profession and also how they believe the novel should function. For example, in giving Nick Jenkins a background very similar to Powell's own, Powell denies Nick his own individuality and creates him as an abstract representation of one of the ways in which the novelist can function – as a frame or filter through which the reader can view the passage of time and the changes wrought upon society. As a character Nick lacks the impact of many of the novel's other major personalities – particularly Widmerpool, to whom Nick acts as a foil – as a novelist his position on the sidelines, as observer, is explicable and thus his own story functions to frame the stories he tells of the other characters. Christopher's vocation as a novelist is used to frame the evolution of his writing persona through the four stories which make up *Down There on a Visit*. Waugh and Spark's self-begetting narratives also function as frame stories in that act of writing the narrative frames the events of the novel which inspires that novel to be written. Just as the use of autobiographical material is evident in depictions many novelist-characters, aside from those discussed in this chapter, the use of the novelist-character as a device by which to frame the narrative[465] is also apparent in a number of novels looked at within this thesis. Chapter Four selects seven novels in which the use of the novelist-character as a framing device, often in conjunction with other literary devices such as the unreliable narrator and authorial intrusion, acts to structure the narrative but also to disrupt a range of preconceived notions on the status and function of the novel.

[465] As explained in the introduction to the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV: THE NOVELIST-CHARACTER AS FRAMING DEVICE

I. INTRODUCTION

> I had set out once to store, to codify, to annotate the past before it was utterly lost – that at least was a task I had set myself. I had failed in it (perhaps it was hopeless?) for no sooner had I embalmed one aspect of it in words than the intrusion of new knowledge disrupted the frame of reference, everything flew asunder, only to reassemble again in unforeseen, unpredictable patterns…[466]

A framing narrative is one which introduces or encloses another narrative (or multiple narratives) within it: William Nelles defines this type of narrative as a 'structural device of the "story within a story," variously labelled "frame," "Chinese box," "Russian doll," "interpolated," "nested," "boxed," or "embedded" narrative.'[467] Framing narratives highlight the storytelling aspect of fiction, which reflects the novelist-character's own act of composition: the very inclusion of a novelist-character or novelist-narrator will often constitutes a frame as the story of their own act of writing frames the action of the novel. Each section in this chapter looks at a novel or novels in which the novelist-character is employed to act as a framing device, allowing the narrative strands contained within the novel to interrogate the function of the novel. The six authors consider a range of methods of using the novelist-character to shape and frame the plot – such as the unreliable narrator, authorial intrusions, and multiple embedded narratives – so that the character comes to function as a metaphor for contemporary concep-

[466] Lawrence Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p.657.
[467] William Nelles, *Frameworks: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narrative* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), p.1.

tions of authorship. With the exception of the Martin Amis character in *Money* (1984), all of the novelist-characters examined in this chapter also function as first-person narrators, meaning that their frame story becomes the cypher through which the reader experiences the text. This is especially important for the first two novels – Amis's *London Fields* (1989) and Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* – both of which make use of the device of an unreliable narrator, along with other conflicting narrators or writer-characters, which causes the reader to doubt and question the veracity of the text, thus deriding fiction's ability to represent any kind of reality. In the frame narrative, as Nelles points out, 'the doubling of embedding typically functions to provide, clarify, or complicate a narrator's motivation for telling a story, or to establish or undermine a narrator's credibility,'[468] as the unreliable narrators in Amis and Durrell's novels do. The seven novels looked at in this chapter use the novelist-character to enact a framing narrative which allows even greater degrees of metafictional reflexivity as it emphasises the storytelling aspect within fiction writing. In addition to central novelist-character, the majority of these novels also utilise multiple subsidiary characters who write, either professionally or privately, or establish artistic or philosophical principles. These multiple writer characters contribute to the multivocal nature of the texts, explicitly examining the collaboration of intertexts through which each individual novel communicates a larger narrative to the reader. This is enhanced, especially in *The Alexandria Quartet, The Golden Notebook*, and *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939), through the use of multiple narrative levels – Chinese box or Russian doll embedded narrative structures – forming a palimpsest of texts and intertexts, narrative voices, and perceptions of reality that the reader must piece together.

All of the novels in this chapter satirise the supposed mimetic intention of the novel, calling into question the need to differentiate between different levels of fiction and supposed reality. In examining the nature of truth they conclude that what is 'real' and what is 'true' are

[468] Ibid, p.144.

often two very different things. The first section looks at the unreliable novelist-narrator of Amis's *London Fields*, a narrative device that is compounded by further writing characters who mock the very idea of omniscient authorship by duping the narrator at every turn. The following section continues an examination of the unreliable narrator in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, although the main focus of this section is the novelist-narrator's position within the palimpsestic narrative. The palimpsest – a manuscript in which the original text has been written over – is used by Durrell to represent the multi-layered nature of reality, which the four books of the novel address through their different reworkings of the past. The third section looks at three novels – *Under the Net* (1954), *The Golden Notebook* (1962), and *The Razor's Edge* (1944) – and how, in each novel, the use of the novelist-character to validate the frame story allows the novel's form to reflect the content and themes of each. *Under the Net* utilises the self-begetting writer character and text, whilst *The Golden Notebook* and *The Razor's Edge* use the novelist-character as a method of authenticating the story-within-a-story framing narrative. *The Golden Notebook* employs a ordered structure of journal extracts from Anna's different writing projects, dispersed between fictionalised accounts of her life 'Free Women,' told by a third person narrator. This structure is repeated until it becomes evident that Anna's decision to compartmentalise her writing is not an effective creative strategy and all the component narratives merge to become the 'Golden Notebook.' The narrator of *The Razor's Edge* is a fictionalised version of Somerset Maugham, who plays the role of benign bystander, observing but rarely involving himself in the action of the novel – much like Nick Jenkins in Powell's *Dance*. Maugham's narrative persona leads to a consideration of the role of the novelist as storyteller which is taken up in the final section, looking at *At Swim-Two-Birds* and, to a lesser extent, Amis's *Money*, which also involves a fictionalised version of the author. Although in *Money* the Martin Amis character does not explicitly frame the narrative, the novel's subtitle 'A Suicide Note,' along with its introductory note signed 'M. A.' position a Martin

Amis, whether as biographical persona or fictional construct, as creator of the frame which John Self manages to break out of. Both *Money* and *At Swim-Two-Birds* use explicit metafictional elements to break down the supposed conventions or 'rules' of the novel. Amis interjects himself as a character whilst O'Brien uses myriad literary styles, writer or storytelling characters, and embedded narrative levels to show how the chaos of modern life may be better reflected in a metafictional work than by the realist novel.

This chapter sets out to establish the novelist-character as a metafictional or self-reflexive device for exploring a range of narrative issues within the novel. The use of the character within the frame narrative forces the reader to examine the nature of fiction and the way it imitates life: through use of the novelist-character the actual writer owns up to the presence of a writer in the text, thus in one sense depicting the reality of the writer who does in fact create the text, but also demonstrating the restrictions upon this writer. This problematises the attempt of realist fiction to reflect reality which seems doomed to fail because of the novel's inherent self-reflexivity, thus pulling apart the conceit that literature can in any way represent real life but also questioning the need to differentiate between fiction and reality. When reading we willingly suspend the knowledge that what we read is a creation. The novelist-character both affirms and undermines this notion by completely representing the quality of fiction as both a constructed thing and an attempt to be 'realistic.'

II. 'THE TRUTH DOESN'T MATTER ANY MORE'

The Unreliable Author-Narrator(s) in Martin Amis's *London Fields*

> I feel seamless and insubstantial, like a creation. As if someone made me up, for money. And I don't care.[469]

The layering of reality and authority in *London Fields* is achieved by Amis's employment of multiple author figures: the oblivious writer-narrator Samson Young who frames the narrative by positioning himself as the teller of the 'true' story he believes he has stumbled into; Nicola Six, the orchestrator and puppet-master of the central plot, which ensures her own murder; and the elusive Mark Asprey, who re-frames Samson's narrative by acting as his literary executor. Asprey shares his initials with the 'real' author of the text, Martin Amis, which further compounds the novel's questioning of authority and representation, and the boundary between fiction and reality. This study concentrates on Sam: how his role as the narrator has been set-up by Nicola and Asprey, and what this manipulation (as well as his gullibility) tells us about Amis's figuring of the contemporary novelist-character. Each of the novel's three authorial figures signifies a different form of authorship – Nicola's visions of the future and her engineering of the plot through her control of the other characters characterises the prophetic Romantic author. Sam, a blocked and slowly dying writer, merely transcribes the action Nicola has coordinated and seems incapable of original creation. He even laments his inability to construct a narrative: 'I can invent: I can lie. So how come I can't invent.'[470] He represents the postmodern reality of a powerless and unimportant author, which Frederick Holmes notes

[469] Martin Amis, *London Fields* (London: Vintage, 1999), p.470.
[470] Ibid, p.42.

'both comically illustrates Roland Barthes's thesis about the death of the author and parodies it by rendering it literal.'[471] In this way Asprey, whom Holmes suggests 'might exist on a higher ontological plane,'[472] stands for the implied author; he is never directly experienced as a character by the reader but exists as an impression of the real author, whose initials he shares; nevertheless, he is created in and by the text. Asprey, as the implied author, is ultimately responsible for how the reader gauges the unreliability of Sam for, as Gregorie Currie observes:

> Narrative unreliability is a product of a discrepancy between what we might call internal and external perspectives. The external perspective is that of the so-called "implied author," a figure who in a sense may [him or] herself be fictional or imagined, because her mental economy does not necessarily correspond to that of the actual author, but who is not to be thought of as occupying a position within the work itself. Rather [he or] she is conceptualized as the agent responsible for the story.[473]

Currie goes on to discuss the dominance of the implied author over the narrator in determining truth in the narrative. Certainly what we see of Asprey through his notes to Sam expose some of the gaps in Sam's reportage; although he appears to be only a liminal character, he reveals his true self at the end of the narrative. Only then does Sam finally begin to understand the situation, although he remains uncertain to the end: in a note to Asprey, in which he asks him to be his literary executor (read executioner), he concludes with 'PPS: You didn't set me up. Did you?'[474] The final statement is one of trust but the question that follows it un-

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[471] Frederick Holmes, 'The Death of the Author as Cultural Critique in *London Fields,*' in ed. Ricardo Miguel Alfonso, *Powerless Fictions? Ethics, Cultural Critique, and American Fiction in the Age of Postmodernism* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), p.53.
[472] Ibid, p.54.
[473] Gregorie Currie, 'Unreliability Refigured: Narrative in Literature and Film,' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Winter, 1995), p.20.
[474] *London Fields*, p.268.

dermines the entire narrative, proving to Sam and to the reader that in fact the whole plot *has* been a set up and that Nicola and Asprey have conspired against Sam for their own ends: Nicola gets the dramatic death she desires and Asprey gets Sam's story to replace the manuscript Nicola burnt. Although Asprey is decried as a successful hack throughout the narrative, Nicola tells us that this manuscript 'had something. It wasn't the usual trex he writes. It was from the heart.'[475]

The novel which under Asprey's editorship becomes *London Fields*, is his pay-off, although he cannot be said to have authored it but merely appropriated it from Sam, who in turn procured the story from Nicola. In an interview with Will Self, Amis calls Asprey 'an anti-writer,'[476] whilst Amis's own influence over the text, although implicit, is relegated to just a name on the book jacket. The fact that Martin Amis and Mark Asprey have the same initials, leading us to question the authorship of the 'Note' – signed, with deliberate ambiguity, M. A.[477] – which begins the novel, confounds an already complex layering of narratives and distances Amis from responsibility over the text, as he hides behind the writer-narrators. This is something that Richard Walsh has identified as being 'the purpose of the narrator…to release the author from any accountability for the "facts" of fictional narrative.'[478]

The various levels of textual theft in *London Fields* emphasise the problematic relationship of fiction to truth and reality. In a novel where 'everyone was cheating. Everyone was cheating – because everyone was cheating,'[479] whose version, if any, is to be trusted? All three authorial figures are equally unreliable – Asprey and Nicola in their deception of Sam, and Sam himself in his failure to comprehend the truth of his own situation, and his naiveté in believing the organic nature of the story he has stumbled across:

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[475] Ibid, p.453.
[476] Will Self 'An Interview with Martin Amis,' *Mississippi Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, New British Fiction (Spring, 1993), p.150.
[477] Amis also does this in the 'note' which begins *Money*.
[478] Richard Walsh, 'Who Is the Narrator?' *Poetics Today*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter, 1997), p.500.
[479] *London Fields*, p.133.

> This is a true story but I can't believe it's really happening. It's a murder story too. I can't believe my luck…What a gift. This page is briefly stained by my tears of gratitude. Novelists don't usually have it so good, do they, when something real happens (something unified, dramatic and pretty saleable), and they just write it down?[480]

The emphasis placed on Sam's disbelief that such a story could really happen, quickly dispels its veracity for the reader; although he frequently remarks upon the unbelievable nature of his scenario, Sam is either oblivious to the warning signs or else chooses to ignore them. The unreliable narrator, a term coined by Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, has been redefined since the 1980s by narratologists including Yacobi, Chatman, James Phelan, Currie, Peter Rabinowitz and William Riggan, and 'is generally considered as one of the typical devices of modern and postmodern literature, connected as it is with the transformation of traditional social schemes and the re-evaluation of the concept of the individual in the twentieth century.'[481] Riggan divides his unreliable narrators into four types – the pícaro, madman, naïf, and clown.[482] Under these broad classifications, the character of Sam can be most easily fitted into that of the naïf,[483] 'an easily fooled and occasionally uncomprehending narrator, by nature given to recounting events and experiences in a straight-faced style.'[484] He relies upon Nicola's directing of her own story, along with her manipulation of both Guy and Keith (and also Asprey and Sam), to inform his writing, even though he knows something is amiss:

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[480] Ibid, p.1.
[481] Alice Jedličková, 'An Unreliable Narrator in an Unreliable World: Negotiating between Rhetorical Narratology, Cognitive Studies and Possible Worlds Theory,' in ed., Elke D'Hoker & Gunther Martens, *Narrative Unreliability in the Twentieth-Century First-Person Novel*(Berlin and New York: Walter de Gryter, 2008), p.281.
[482] William Riggan, *Pícaros, Madmen, Naïfs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1981).
[483] Although arguably Sam, who disregards the facts so often, acts more than a little like the madman, refusing to see past his own limited and ultimately destructive world view.
[484] Riggan, p.152.

> I get stuff from Nicola but who am I kidding. There are things I'm not seeing, or not understanding… How could I get it so wrong? How could I not see? Everywhere there are things that I'm not seeing.[485]

As part of Sam's decay his sight begins to fail – 'I think I'm going blind. My eyes have become such pitiful instruments'[486] – thus emphasising his lack of narrative vision, foresight and comprehension. At times, especially as the novel progresses, he does display the intuition that all is not as it seems but consistently ignores the foreshadowing of his and the novel's outcome. His asides give the reader clues, such as 'I kind of hate to say it, but Mark Asprey was the key,'[487] which show that, far from being blind to the evidence he is simply unable to understand the bigger picture. The implied or ideal reader is able to use these signs to see the truth of Sam's unreliability and solve the mysteries of the novel. Sam's powerlessness is contrasted with Nicola, who is credited by most critics as being the driving force of the narrative. Brian Finney, for example, states that whilst:

> Nicola's knowledge of future events puts her on a par with Amis, the author…Sam's supposedly superior position as narrator is quickly undermined by his immersion in a narrative that he claims merely to be inscribing from "real" life. Amis recounts Sam's thoughts and actions by using a first-person voice for the sub-chapters in which he features, imbuing Sam with a privileged narrative position that buttresses Sam's deluded claim to be an external reporter of others' lives.[488]

The point Finney raises about Sam's privileged narrative position being at odds with what he tells us about his transcription of the 'true' story he watches unfolding is a common discrep-

[485] *London Fields*, pp.284;436.
[486] Ibid, p.369.
[487] Ibid, p.42.
[488] Brian Finney, *Martin Amis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p.50.

ancy in texts where the narrator is, under Genette's definition, intradiegetic-homodiegetic. [489] As both narrator and character inside the text, Sam's knowledge of the other characters should be constrained to what they tell him and what he observes, but he displays unprecedented knowledge of their every movement and innermost thoughts. Sam seems to fool himself into believing that he is simply documenting Nicola's story, constantly telling the reader about his inability to make things up. The implication is that Sam *has* been lying, not only to the reader but also to himself. The other possibility is that Sam's narrative is manipulated into appearing to be a fabrication by either his editor (Asprey), or his author (Amis).

As a flawed and fallible narrator Sam impacts upon the relationship between reader and writer. Yacobi's definition of the narrator as a neutral 'mediator relaying the implicit message (world, theme, effect) from its authorial point of transmission or origination to its point of reception and decoding by the reader,'[490] contrasts with Riggan's figuring of the unreliable narrator. For Riggan, the unreliable narrator is prone to:

> Human fallibility in terms of memory and interpretation…such a narrator can only report to the best of his ability and recollection the overt words and actions in his protagonist's life and draw from these his inferences and interpretations concerning the inner nature of that protagonist. He is incapable of penetrating directly into the psyche of the protagonist or of any other character within the chronicle.[491]

With such a narrator, as Seymour Chatman notes, the reader becomes instrumental in deciphering the truth – 'the implied reader must infer that the ostensible message is being can-

[489] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.248.
[490] Tamar Yacobi, 'Narrative Structure and Fictional Mediation,' *Poetics Today*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1987), p.335.
[491] Riggan, p.22.

celled or at the least called into question by an underlying message that the narrator does not understand.'[492]

In keeping with Rabinowitz's understanding of the unreliable narrator, Sam doesn't intend his unreliability; he doesn't set out to deceive:

> An unreliable narrator…is not simply a narrator who "does not tell the truth" – what fictional narrator ever tells the literal truth? Rather, an unreliable narrator is one who tells lies, conceals information, misjudges with respect to the narrative audience – that is, one whose statements are untrue not by the standards of the real world or of the authorial audience but by the standards of his own narrative audience.[493]

Sam may honestly believe himself when he tells us 'Boy, am I a reliable narrator,'[494] but for the reader he is 'too insistent on his own reliability.'[495] It too often seems that he fails to grasp the distinction between fiction and reality and is unsure as to exactly what role he should be playing as the writer-narrator. He has a total lack of control over the actions of the other characters and subsequently the twists of the plot, expressing this lack of power: 'If London is a spider's web, then where do I fit in? Maybe I'm the fly. I'm the fly.'[496] This metaphor works against stereotypical depictions of the author as puppet-master, pulling strings or weaving a web[497] of fictional misdirection, to show how little Sam fits this role: within the work, the role of the writer should be that of the spider *not* the fly. Catherine Bernard states, with 'novelists

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[492] Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p.153-54.
[493] Peter J. Rabinowitz, 'Truth in Fiction: A Re-examination of Audiences,' *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Autumn, 1977), pp. 133-34.
[494] *London Fields*, p.162.
[495] John A. Dern, *Martians, Monsters and Madonna: Fiction and Form in the World of Martin Amis* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), p.44.
[496] *London Fields*, p.3.
[497] This is perhaps a reference to Virginia Woolf's statement in *A Room of One's Own* that 'fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners,' (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2001), p.50. Amis may be demonstrating Sam's entanglement in a fictional web which he believes to be reality.

like Sam in *London Fields*, their function is clearly, from the start, to problematize the uncertain relations between the world and representation, be it visual or linguistic.'[498] His representation of Sam suggests Amis's dismissal of the ability of fiction to bring shape and understanding to reality or tell universal truths; questioning whether indeed to tell the truth is the role of fiction:

> In fiction (rightly so called), people become coherent and intelligible – and they aren't like that. We all know they aren't. We all know it from personal experience. We've been there.[499]

By questioning the ability of the authorial figures to represent the truth, Amis clearly 'wants to free literature from its connections to the author. He achieves that, to a certain extent, not by killing the author but by relativizing the power of the author's authority over the text and by questioning the kinds of truths that authority gives form to.'[500] Sam, as an unreliable narrator and author, destabilises not simply his own position but also that of the postmodern author. He states that he is unable to create, instead merely recording the scene set-up for him:

> I'm not one of those excitable types who get caught making things up. Who get caught improving on reality. I can embellish, I can take certain liberties. Yet to invent the bald facts of a life (for example) would be quite beyond my powers. Why? I think it might have something to do with me being such a nice guy, originally. Anyway at the moment reality is behaving unimprovably, and nobody will know.[501]

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[498] Catherine Bernard, 'Disremembering/Remembering Mimesis: Martin Amis and Graham Swift,' in ed., Theo D'haen and Hans Bertens, *British Postmodern Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), p.124.
[499] *London Fields*, p.240.
[500] Peter Stokes, 'Martin Amis and the Postmodern Suicide: Tracing the Postnuclear Narrative at the Fin de Millennium,' *CRITIQUE: Studies in Contemporary Fiction***,** 38.4 (Summer 1997), accessed via Gale Group, British Library electronic resources, 25/04/13.
[501] *London Fields*, p.39.

As a self-professed writer Sam undermines the view of the author as creator, and Amis removes from him the god-like power over his characters, making him little more than a voyeur, as he confesses to Nicola: 'I'm just an observer. Or a listener.'[502] This unreliable narrator, then, acts to redress the balance of truth and trust between the novel and the real world. By parodying the idea that truth can exist within the novel form, *London Fields* attempts to represent something more like actual reality, in which things are not clear-cut and people often aren't coherent or intelligible: there is no order in the chaos of life, as there is in the novel. In one of his later letters to Sam, Asprey delivers the harsh reality:

> You don't understand, do you, my talentless friend? Even as you die and rot with envy. It doesn't matter what anyone writes any more. The time for it mattering has passed. The truth doesn't matter any more and *is not wanted*.[503]

The unreliable narrator's role is to undermine and unpick the mimetic intention of the novel. As both narrator and writer (or at least scribe), Sam destabilises notions of authorship, authority, power, and creativity – not only in his deferral to Nicola in terms of the story – but also in regard to his physical health. Sam, whose slow death is brought on by some sort of radiation he was exposed to as a child at 'London Fields,' represents not only the death of the author but also the death of literature. This is something Stokes believes is a major concern for Amis: he posits that *London Fields*'s fin de siècle setting and the novel's premonition of an apocalypse, together with the impotent writer narrator:

> Argue that the fragmented character of that postmodern authority figure is a result of the precarious character of literature at the close of the twentieth century…Nuclear war could, in the blink of an eye, wreak a literary devastation…the

[502] Ibid, p.62.
[503] Ibid, p.452.

> literary archive itself would be erased and the author would consequently cease to have any authority at all.[504]

Stokes's concerns about the nuclear threat are in many ways equally applicable to the effects of changing conditions within the literary market. The metaphorical disappearance of the author is played out in *London Fields* through Sam's equivocal wasting disease. As the novel progresses Sam weakens and decays visibly to the extent that he becomes unrecognisable: 'People I haven't seen for three days look right through me. I myself keep going to the mirror for an update.'[505] As a metaphor for the dwindling power and cult status of the author figure Sam is juxtaposed with the success and lavish, reprehensible lifestyle of the hack writer, Asprey. Sam appears insubstantial and one-dimensional in comparison with the more vividly drawn characters like Nicola and Keith. For example, amongst his (few) characteristics is the fact that he is American, although as Mick Imlah notes, 'his Americanness…is registered by one reference to a "faucet" in nearly 500 pages.'[506] His shapelessness as a character and narrator mean that he becomes difficult to decipher within the text and, compounded with his wasting disease, he seems to disperse into the narrative, leaving Nicola to lead the plot forward. Prior to the novel's climax Sam has already told us that Nicola 'outwrites us all,'[507] but he fails to realise the significance of these words until he finally understands that she has tricked him into murdering her, and that it was always going to be written that way:

> She outwrote me. Her story worked. And mine didn't. There's really nothing more to say. Always me: from the first moment in the Black Cross she

[504] Stokes.
[505] *London Fields*, p.346.
[506] Mick Imlah, 'A Dart in the Heart,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 September (1989), p.1051.
[507] *London Fields*, p.43.

> looked my way with eyes of recognition. She knew she had found him: her murderer…imagination failed me. And all else.[508]

Nicola identifies that, unlike Keith or Guy, Sam really has nothing to lose and that in living for the story he seals his fate. The remainder of the narrative, the Guy-Nicola-Keith faux love triangle was ultimately meaningless, except for sustaining Sam's interest, drawing him deeper into the story: his lack of imagination and obsession with the narrative meant that he was ultimately the only one Nicola knew would be compelled to see it through. In the end, he was her only reliable bet. The embedded narratives – Nicola's within Sam's (or Sam's within Nicola's), which is contained by Asprey's, all actually within Amis's novel – belie the neatness and symmetry offered by the novel in its introductory note in which 'M. A.' tells us that 'there are two kinds of title – two grades, two orders.'[509] The multiple jostling narrative levels confuse the layering of authorial power beyond the proposed dual stories of Sam's narrative within Asprey's narrative, or Asprey's within Amis's, and this act to question the proposed sense of order which fiction may be seen to impart.

[508] Ibid, p.466.
[509] *London Fields*, 'Note.'

III. 'ONLY PARTIALLY PERCEIVED'

Misreading/writing and Artistic Development in Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*

> There, lying on the table in the yellow lamplight, lay the great interlinear to *Justine* – as I had called it. It was crosshatched, crabbed, starred with questions and answers in different-coloured inks, in typescript. It seemed to me then to be somehow symbolic of the very reality we had shared – a palimpsest upon which each of us had left his or her individual traces, layer by layer.[510]

Like Amis's *London Fields*, *The Alexandria Quartet* uses a central novelist-character to examine the nature of truth. However, whereas Amis looks at the inability of fiction to tell the truth, Durrell focuses his novel's philosophy on the concept that multiple truths can exist, layering upon each other; that ultimately truth, which can only ever be subjective, is not the purpose of art. Although the concerns of each novel, as well as the devices put in place to illustrate them, are similar, the two novels diverge in terms of theme and conclusion. Amis ends with the suicide of his narrator, framed by the textual appropriation by the implied author Asprey; but Durrell, who gives his initials instead to his narrator L. G. Darley, ends his *Quartet* with the promise of new creation, something Anne Zahlan has asserted is 'a modernist affirmation of the artistic vocation.'[511] Darley, who by the end of the sequence has developed and matured as a writer is, as Lionel Trilling writes, 'at last able to know that he has achieved salvation, that he is at the great moment of "an artist coming of age",' and that the 'once upon

[510] *The Alexandria Quartet*, p.215.
[511] Anne R. Zahlan, 'Crossing the Border: Lawrence Durrell's Alexandrian Conversion to Postmodernism,' *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Autumn, 1999), p.84.

a time' beginning of Darley's own novel 'announces…that he is going to tell a story – really *tell* it as against representing it.'[512]

Kellman includes Durrell's *Quartet* in his 1980 work *The Self-Begetting Novel*, however the *Quartet* itself is not self-begotten; it is Darley who creates himself, freeing himself from the frame text to become a writer in his own right. We know Darley chooses to begin his own creative work with:

> Four words (four letters! Four faces!) with which every story-teller since the world began had staked his slender claim to the attention of fellow-men. Words which presage simply the old story of an artist coming of age. I wrote: 'Once upon a time….'
>
> And I felt as if the whole universe had given me a nudge![513]

This contrasts with the opening of the *Quartet* itself, 'The sea is high again today,'[514] but more than this, it makes little sense in terms of Durrell's plan for the sequence: the four volumes are designed to show the evolution of Darley as a novelist, the conclusion sets him free of the narrative we have read in order that he write his own story. Alan Friedman writes that Darley's '"Once upon a time" serves the same function as Stephen's "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and forever in good stead," at the end of Joyce's *A Portrait*…both figures have emerged not as identical with their authors but as artists in their own right.'[515] If the ending were to return Darley to the beginning then he would have learnt nothing. The two references in *Balthazar* to palimpsests, coupled with Durrell's introductory note to this volume, indicate a the-

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[512] Lionel Trilling, 'The Quartet: Two Reviews,' in ed, Harry T. Moore, *The World of Lawrence Durrell* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), pp.58-59 & 64.
[513] *The Alexandria Quartet*, p.877.
[514] Ibid, p.17.
[515] Alan Warren Friedman, *Lawrence Durrell and The Alexandria Quartet: Art for Love's Sake* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), p.164.

matic design that simply does not support the self-begetting of the Quartet.[516] Durrell's note to the first edition of *Balthazar* sets forth his ideology of the novel:

> Modern literature offers us no Unities, so I have turned to science and am trying to complete a four-decker novel whose form is based on the relativity proposition. Three sides of space and one of time constitute the soup-mix recipe of a continuum. The four novels follow this pattern. The first three parts, however, are to be deployed spatially…and are not linked in a serial form. They interlap, interweave, in a purely spatial relation. Time is stayed. The fourth part alone will represent time and be a true sequel…the third part, *Mountolive*, is a straight naturalistic novel in which the narrator of *Justine* and *Balthazar* becomes an object, i.e. a character.[517]

The *Quartet* takes the modern relativity principle, as well as that of the ancient palimpsest, to demonstrate Durrell's thesis on the nature of truth and art's representation of it. The layering effect in the novel not only represents multiple truths and serves to illustrate how, through seeing the different versions of the story, Darley matures as a writer; it also comments upon the inherently intertextual nature of the novel form, through the four 'stories' within the *Quartet*, and the myriad allusions to the writing and composition of Alexandria. Ray Morrison has noted that the narrator 'begins to reconstruct Alexandria and his life from notebooks, diaries, and materials by Justine, Nessim, Arnauti, E. M. Forster and Cavafy,'[518] assimilating real-life literary inspirations with the writing of characters within the novels and thus validating Barthes's contention that the text is a 'tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable cen-

[516] The following section, on Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*, deals explicitly with self-begetting fictions.
[517] Lawrence Durrell, *Balthazar* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p.7.
[518] Ray Morrison, 'Mirrors and the Heraldic Universe in Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*,' *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 33, No. 4 Lawrence Durrell Issue, Part II (Winter, 1987), p.501.

tres of culture.'[519] Gérard Genette in his book *Palimpsests* (1982) examines the relationships a text can have to preceding texts, something Genette sees as 'a universal feature of literarity: there is no literary work that does not evoke (to some extent and according to how it is read) some other literary work, and in that sense all works are hypertextual.'[520] The palimpsestic nature of *The Alexandria Quartet* – in which each of the four books effectively retells the same story – demonstrates not only the inherently intertextual and self-reflexive nature of the novel form but also the way in which stories take shape with layer by layer of narratives. The significance of the various intertexts which permeate Darley's narrative illustrate the value of reading others' narratives: Darley is, as Kellman points out, not just a writer but also a reader 'not only of Balthazar's "Interlinear" and of other documents that fall into his hands, but of a wide range of cryptic and conflicting codes.' [521] His misreading of events leads to (what Balthazar and other characters see as) the inaccuracy of representation in the narrative, although Durrell is keen to point out that Darley's interpretation is still valid as it remains true to his recollections of Alexandria. Particularly in *Balthazar* and *Clea*, Darley's reminiscences of the novelist-character Pursewarden are used by Durrell to underwrite the idea of an ultimate 'truth.' Pursewarden's aphorisms often relate the comparative worth of truth to art (always to the detriment of truth), such as: 'Truth is independent of fact,' 'If things were always as they seemed how impoverished would be the imagination of man!' 'We live…lives based upon selected fictions,' and 'the so-called act of living is really an act of the imagination.'[522] Ultimately, the verification of fact is unimportant to Darley (and Durrell) and it is his writer's im-

[519] Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, p.146.
[520]Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans, Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p.9.
[521] Steven G. Kellman, 'Sailing to Alexandria: The Reader in/of Durrell's Byzantine *Quartet*,' in ed., Frank L. Kernowski, *Into the Labyrinth: Essays in the Art of Lawrence Durrell* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), p.118.
[522] *The Alexandria Quartet*, pp.386;216;210;772.

agination, 'his ability not simply to piece together the many fragments of his past but to reconcile and recreate them into a whole, coherent work – a complex but unified vision.'[523]

The multiple texts and intertexts that make up the *Quartet* correlate with the characters' divergent points of view and understanding of events, in order that a fully realised portrait of the city and its inhabitants can be construed. As well as the references to palimpsests, Durrell also uses mirrors to evoke the multiple angles from which everything can be seen. Morrison counts 'more than one hundred and twenty mirrors,'[524] but the most famous mirror scene displays something of Durrell's design for the novel behind his multi-layered narrative:

> Justine hated to hear the truth spoken…I remember her sitting before the multiple mirrors at the dressmaker's, being fitted for a shark-skin costume, and saying: 'Look! Five different pictures of the same subject. Now if I wrote I would try for a multi-dimensional effect in character, a sort of prism-sightedness. Why should not people show more than one profile at a time?'[525]

This mirror's relation to the fragmentation of the self, obviously a central trope in modernism, also comments upon different potentials of the writer: he can act like the mirror and reflect multiple realities, but always only on the surface; alternatively he can construct anew out of the various impressions. Darley fails, in the early volume, in his design 'completely to rebuild this city in my brain',[526] because to begin with he only reflects upon events: he tells us that he has 'no pretensions to being an artist. I want to put things down simply and crudely, without style.'[527] It is only later, after Balthazar's interlinear has revealed to him how mistaken he was about what he considered to be the 'truth,' that he realises that truth itself is not vital, it is what he himself makes of it as a writer. Darley reflects on something Pursewarden had said to

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[523] Donald P. Kaczvinsky, *Lawrence Durrell's Major Novels, or The Kingdom of the Imagination* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997), p.38.
[524] Morrison, p.500.
[525] *The Alexandria Quartet*, p.28.
[526] Ibid, p.17.
[527] Ibid, p.73.

him earlier in the narrative – 'if things were always what they seemed, how impoverished would be the imagination of man!'[528] However at this stage of *Balthazar* he is seemingly unable to let go of his original intention of rebuilding Alexandria in his mind as he interprets it, in order to make sense of what happened to him. Darley, although he accepts his misreading of the truth, cannot yet turn it into the stuff of fiction. Therefore he must continue to 'set it down in cold black and white, until such time as the memory or impulse of it is spent. I know that the key I am trying to turn is in myself.'[529] This key is his ability to use the skewed and varied truths of the city in order to create something new – his own work of fiction.

The revelations in *Balthazar* set Darley on his way to becoming a writer, but it is between the third and fourth volumes that he really begins to develop and see the errors of his previous work. Between *Balthazar* and *Clea* is *Mountolive*, which unlike the other three volumes of the *Quartet* is not narrated by Darley, but by an unknown, supposedly omniscient narrator. Much scholarly debate is given over to *Mountolive* for this reason.[530] Durrell tells us, in the note to *Balthazar*, that in *Mountolive* the narrator (Darley) will become 'an object, i.e. a character'[531] but that does not necessarily negate the possibility that Darley actually authors *Mountolive*. His authoring of *Mountolive* also prefigures his eventual unique composition, which he is finally able to begin after the conclusion of the *Quartet*. As Kaczvinsky notes 'it preserves the continuity, consistency, and coherence of the entire series…that Darley himself "wrote" *Mountolive*.'[532] Warren Wedin, who initially proposed the hypothesis, points out that several sections of *Balthazar* are written by Darley but narrated in the third person, thus smoothing the narrative link between the second and the third volumes' narrative style. Wedin suggests

[528] Ibid, p.216.
[529] Ibid, p.217.
[530] See particularly Donald P. Kaczvinsky, *Lawrence Durrell's Major Novels, or The Kingdom of the Imagination* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997); Eugene Hollahan, 'Who Wrote Mountolive? The Same One Who Wrote "Swann in Love"' in ed., Michael H. Begnal, *On Miracle Ground: Essays on the fiction of Lawrence Durrell* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990) and Carol Peirce, '"Wrinkled Deep in Time": The Alexandria Quartet as Many-Layered Palimpsest,' *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Winter, 1987), pp.485-498.
[531] *Balthazar*, p.7.
[532] Kaczvinsky, p.59.

that this device is used to discuss 'events about which Darley could have no personal knowledge…the point here is that Darley is writing an imaginative reconstruction of the events in the third person, based on someone else's information. In other words he is writing fiction.'[533]

This issue of authorship in *Mountolive* is crucial in regard to the sequence's focus on the evolution of the novelist. That Darley narrates the first two volumes, trials his writing style within the third and then resumes narration in the fourth (where he can garner the techniques he has learnt in the writing of *Mountolive* to master the problems in the narrative and finally embark upon his own creative work) would logically fit with Durrell's design for the *Quartet.* No doubt Durrell intended the uncertainty; his biographer Ian MacNiven writes that he regarded the third volume 'as the *clou*, the nail holding together the entire structure of the *Quartet*.'[534] Eugene Hollahan calls it 'the most puzzling piece of *The Alexandria Quartet* as the only piece that could be constructed as "written" in the usual novelistic sense.'[535] In the second edition of his *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983), Booth places the narrator of *Mountolive* in his 'Gallery of Unreliable Narrators and Reflectors.'[536] Friedman comments that 'Durrell deliberately misleads us in many ways, perhaps the most significant of which is his narrator's presumably accurate knowledge of the solutions to factual mysteries…the naïve, unreliable narrator would have us believe that all motives, all causes, are precise and unambiguous.'[537] Arguably, as part of Durrell's design for the sequence, *Mountolive* is offered as a supposed contrast with Darley's subjective 'truths' in the preceding volumes; however, in actuality, it further confounds the idea that truth can exist by offering the reader deliberately false deductions and solutions to the puzzles within the narrative. Friedman concludes that in fact the 'truth ab-

[533] Warren Wedin, 'The Artist as Narrator in *The Alexandria Quartet*,' *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (July, 1972), p.177.
[534] Ian MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p.466.
[535] Hollahan, p.128.
[536] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp.492-94.
[537] Friedman, pp.119-20.

stracted from "felt reality" is neither beautiful, nor important, not even very reliable,'[538] thus the reader is forced to realise that Darley's previous misunderstandings are not that severe, that actually they are important for the development of both the narrative and Darley as a writer: if he has written *Mountolive* then there is an evident continuation of theme in the disregard for the importance of truth.

Darley's infrequent appearances within *Mountolive* are limited to the filter of the titular character, David Mountolive, although he is always described with what Henry Miller saw as characteristic self-deprecation.[539] He participates in *Mountolive* much less than in the other three volumes, arguably because his writing of the story has forced him above the action; he returns himself to the action as narrator in *Clea*, but the change in him is evident from the first page, in which he redresses his authorial intentions:

> I had set out once to store, to codify, to annotate the past before it was utterly lost – that at least was a task I had set myself. I had failed in it (perhaps it was hopeless?) for no sooner had I embalmed one aspect of it in words than the intrusion of new knowledge disrupted the frame of reference, everything flew asunder only to reassemble again in unforeseen, unpredictable patterns….
> 'To re-work reality' I had written somewhere; temeritous, presumptuous words indeed.[540]

Darley not only recognises but freely admits his failure to follow through with his self-appointed task, seeing that his plan for writing was ultimately unworkable and unrealistic. He seemed very much further away from reaching this conclusion even at the end of *Balthazar*, and we see so little of the character Darley in *Mountolive* that we are unable to perceive how exactly he has come to this realisation unless we accept that he learnt through doing: that he

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[538] Ibid, p.132.
[539] Letter to from Henry Miller to Lawrence Durrell, 7th September, 1959. ed., Ian MacNiven, *Durrell-Miller Letters, 1935-1980* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p.345.
[540] *The Alexandria Quartet*, p.657.

did write *Mountolive*. He has been able to step out of the shadow of the *Quartet*'s other novelists, moving 'from a reliance on the literature of others to the creation of his own.'[541] Even the overbearing Pursewarden's input in *Clea*, in the form of 'My Conversations with Brother Ass,'[542] augments Darley's position as a writer to one of equality, by calling him brother. Darley begins the *Quartet* feeling threatened and jealous of Pursewarden's success, he tells us: 'I disliked this literary figure for the contrast he offered to his own work – poetry and prose of real grace. I did not know him well but he was financially successful as a novelist which made me envious.'[543] However he comes to appreciate him as he furthers his understanding of himself as a writer, he is finally able to exorcise the myth that Pursewarden, as well as the other major novelist figure Arnauti, have held over his understanding of the narrative:

> I began to see too that the real 'fiction' lay neither in Arnauti's pages nor Pursewarden's – nor even in my own. It was life itself that was a fiction – we were all saying it in different ways, each understanding it according to his nature and gift.
>
> It was only now that I began to see how mysteriously the configuration of my own life had taken its shape from the properties of those elements which lie outside the relative life – in the kingdom which Pursewarden calls the 'heraldic universe'. We were three writers, I now saw, confided to a mythical city from which we were to draw our nourishment, in which we were to confirm our gifts. Arnauti, Pursewarden, Darley – like Past, Present and Future tense![544]

The education Darley has received at the hands (or pens) of these other novelists – as well as from subsidiary writing characters like Balthazar and Clea – is vital to the thematic structure

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[541] James Van Dyke Card, '"Tell Me, Tell Me": The Writer as Spellbinder in Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*,' *Modern British Literature*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1975), p.80.
[542] *The Alexandria Quartet*, p.749.
[543] Ibid, p.50.
[544] Ibid, p.792.

of the *Quartet* as it demonstrates how the various intertexts go towards the creation of a complete narrative. Chiara Briganti asserts that, 'as a postmodern author, Darley renounces any claim to invention and originality. Writing becomes for him a question of assemblage in which the writing subject undoes itself and becomes dispersed and fragmented.'[545] Darley learns to accept he cannot control the hypertextual nature of his narrative, that it is by nature something protean, even unstable. Darley is the central figure of the *Quartet* in that his presence frames and structures the narrative, propelling it forward by demonstrating his evolution as a novelist throughout the four books. This is something Durrell has been able to illustrate both thematically and structurally, using the idea of the palimpsest to represent Darley's growth as a novelist through the layering of different versions of the truth, with the suggestion that only together do these disparate readings of truth constitute something approaching reality.

[545] Chiara Brigati, 'Lawrence Durrell and the Vanishing Author,' in ed., Michael H. Begnal, *On Miracle Ground: Essays on the fiction of Lawrence Durrell* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990), p.50.

IV. 'LOOKING FOR THE OUTLINES OF A STORY'

The Novelist-Character and Narrative Structure in Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*, Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, and Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*

> I replaced the book and leaned back against the shelves. I had a sense of everything falling into place to make a pattern which I had not yet had the time to survey.[546]

This section looks at three novels in which the writer-narrator figures as a structural device within the narrative; in each case the writing out of the novelist-narrator's story acts to frame the action of the novel. Murdoch's *Under the Net* employs a circular, mock-quest narrative to show the development of her protagonist Jake as a novelist, taking us to the point where he is finally ready to begin writing, something Kellman has termed 'self-begetting' fiction. Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* uses multiple layers of writing – the journals and writer's notebooks of Anna Wulf – interspersed with sections from a novel, 'Free Women,' to show the fragmentation of the writer's psyche. Maugham uses the novelist-character 'Mr Maugham,' who wanders in and out of the story, to frame the narrative of *The Razor's Edge* (1944). The self-begetting narrative of *Under The Net*, uses a reflexive circularity to comment upon ideas of originality, reliability, and authorial control, whilst the framing used in both *The Golden Notebook* and *The Razor's Edge* where the story within a story can be used to comment on the function and process of storytelling itself. I will begin by discussing how Murdoch's themes and motif within *Under the Net* are accentuated by its circular, self-

[546] Murdoch, *Under the Net*, p.93.

begetting nature, before moving on to look at the implications of Lessing and Maugham's frame narrative. Kellman's *The Self-Begetting Novel* (1980) defines such narratives as:

> An account, usually first person, of the development of a character to the point at which he is able to take up his pen and compose the novel we have just finished reading. Like an infinite recession of Chinese boxes, the self-begetting novel begins again where it ends. Once we have concluded the central protagonist's story of his own sentimental education, we must return to page one to commence in a novel way the product of that process – the mature artist's novel, which itself depicts the making of a novel…this device of narrative which is in effect a record of its own genesis is a happy fusion of form and content. We are at once confronted with both process and product, quests and goal, parent and child…a circular form results, encouraging multiple readings.[547]

Kellman's book takes into account a number of the novels also under discussion in this thesis, notably *Under the Net, The Alexandria Quartet, The Golden Notebook* and Beckett's *Trilogy.* Excepting the *Trilogy*, which Kellman concludes 'faithlessly perpetuates itself and the tradition of the self-begetting novel,'[548] it is *Under the Net* that I feel most fastidiously corresponds to this pattern: Kellman himself admits that both *The Alexandria Quartet* and *The Golden Notebook* do not quite fit his definition of self-begetting. *Under the Net*, not least because of Murdoch's influence from French writers such as Raymond Queneau and Jean-Paul Sartre,[549] not only adheres to the characteristics of the self-begetting tradition, it also inhabits the concerns of the novel form; themes like originality, truth, freedom, experience,

[547] Kellman, *The Self-Begetting Novel*, p.3.
[548] Ibid, p.143.
[549] Kellman asserts that the self-begetting tradition in Modernist literature largely begins with French authors, especially Marcel Proust and Sartre.

and redemption. The title famously comes from Wittgenstein's metaphor, referring 'to the incapacity of language and theory to fully represent contingent reality.'[550] This is indicative of Murdoch's ideological design for the narrative, represented in Jake's misguided and solipsistic concepts; especially in regard to those around him:

> I would be at pains to put my universe in order and set it ticking, when suddenly it would burst again into a mess of the same poor pieces, and Finn and I would be on the run. I say my universe, not ours, because I sometimes feel that Finn has very little inner life…I count Finn as an inhabitant of my universe.[551]

The circular nature of the novel is able to establish the errors in Jake's ways of thinking; his 'theories' about other people, about art and literature, and about the world in general are systematically proved incompatible with what he encounters – he slowly begins to realise that his attitude to life has been wrong: David Gordon writes he 'is mistaken about almost everything in his world.'[552] Through the course of the novel he begins to realise his faults, at one point recognising 'I had so littered my life already with compromises and half-truths.'[553] The shape and structure of the novel is dependent upon the way in which Jake, by a process of trials and errors, comes to understand that he has interpreted the world incorrectly; as Malcolm Bradbury comments 'the shape of the book is a shape with relation to the mind and emotions of Jake.'[554] Jake has put the art of lying above the art of fiction, as is evident from the scene at the beginning of the novel when he goes to Mrs Tinckham's shop, having just been thrown out of Magdalen's flat. He is about to tell her what has happened to him since they last met, but pauses before he embarks upon the story:

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[550] Bran Nicol, *Iris Murdoch: The Retrospective Fiction* Second edition (London: Palgrave, 2004), p.14.
[551] *Under The Net*, p.9.
[552] David J. Gordon, *Iris Murdoch's Fables of Unselfing* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1995), p.82.
[553] *Under The Net*, pp.205-06.
[554] Malcolm Bradbury, 'Iris Murdoch's "Under the Net",' *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring, 1962), p.47.

> I gritted my teeth against speech. I wanted to wait until I could present my story in a more dramatic way. The thing had possibilities, but as yet it lacked form. If I spoke now there was always the danger of my telling the truth; when caught unawares I usually tell the truth, and what's duller than that?[555]

The care Jake takes to craft the story he will tell Mrs Tinckham is juxtaposed with what he tells us on the very next page, whilst considering his manuscripts rescued from Magdalen's, recollecting that she had once torn up part of an epic poem he was writing:

> This dated from the time when I had ideals, at that time too it had not yet become clear to me that the present age was not one in which it was possible to write an epic. At that time I naïvely imagined that there was no reason why one should not attempt to write anything that one felt inclined to write…at a certain point perhaps one ought simply to stop reflecting. I had contrived in fact to stop myself just short of the point at which it would have become clear to me that the present age was not one in which it was possible to write a novel.[556]

He is remarkably blasé when reflecting on the destruction of his writing; so much so that it seems evident that his theory on the writing of an epic has been put in place, in part, to protect his feelings. Jake chastises himself for his naivety in believing he could succeed in such an endeavour, conversely he elevates lying into an art form. The only instance of Jake's writing, aside from his translations of the novels of French author Jean-Pierre Breteuil, is a philosophical treatise *The Silencer* taken from conversations with Hugo Belfounder, whom Jake meets in a cold-cure clinic. Jake's guilt over its publication (without Hugo's knowledge) further affects his feelings towards writing; he wrongly assumes that Hugo felt betrayed by Jake's writing up their talks into a philosophical dialogue between characters called Tamarus

[555] *Under The Net*, p.20.
[556] Ibid, p.21.

and Annandine, because Hugo's essential belief was that language was ineffectual in communicating real thoughts and feelings. During the conversations that form the basis of *The Silencer*, which took place some years prior to the action of the novel, Hugo tells Jake that:

> Language just won't let you present it as it really was…all the time when I speak to you, even now, I'm saying not *precisely* what I think, but what will impress you and make you respond…the whole language is a machine for making falsehoods.[557]

The process by which Jake began to convey Hugo's ideas as a written dialogue, even though he knew this directly opposed Hugo's beliefs, is represented as almost accidental: he took some notes on the conversations they had, adding further to them when he observed they lacked the impact of the actual talks. He continued to revise and polish the notes, filling in parts he couldn't remember with reconstructed dialogue. He recognises the worth of the manuscript, never setting out to deceive Hugo. Despite his apparent dishonesty Jake is a sympathetic character, typical of the picaresque hero,[558] contrasting directly with Hugo's character; something that became a pervasive theme in Murdoch's work – the dichotomy of the artist and the saint.

Jake tells us his 'acquaintance with Hugo is the central theme of this book'[559] as, through the relationship between the two conflicting characters, Murdoch examines the nature of art, beauty, morality, and human goodness; 'the terms of saint and artist are shorthand for opposing attitudes towards creativity, egotism, fantasy and fabulation.'[560] Their respective attitudes towards language reflect the diverse worldviews of the character type each

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[557] Ibid, pp.67-68.
[558] See Angela Hague, 'Picaresque Struggle and the Angry Young Novel,' *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer, 1986), pp.209-220.
[559] *Under The Net*, p,60.
[560] Priscilla Martin and Anne Rowe, *Iris Murdoch: A Literary Life* (London: Palgrave, 2010), p.18.

represents. Jake constantly misinterprets his world, as R. L. Widmann writes 'Miss Murdoch really stacks delusion after delusion on Jake,'[561] he misreads everything from the thoughts and feelings of his friends to his attitude towards art: underestimating Breteuil's novels then being shocked when Breteuil wins the Prix Goncourt. He wrongly assumes Hugo is in love with Anna (with whom Jake is also in love) but it transpires that although Anna loves Hugo, Hugo actually loves her sister, Sadie, who in turn loves Jake. When Jake realises he exclaims to Hugo, 'I knew everything. I got it all the wrong way round, that's all!'[562] causing Barbara Heusel to comment that Jake's bumbling illustrates 'Plato's and Murdoch's fear that the artist's version of the world is seldom accurate.'[563] Jake's deluded view of life sets him up as an unreliable narrator, forcing the reader to 'reflect on his or her [own] interpretive role,'[564] in deciphering the truth from the complex net of the narrator's theories and beliefs. It also compels him into a quest for self-discovery and understanding, resolving itself in his writing of the story. The quest-style of the picaresque narrative in *Under the Net* demands resolution because the pícaro, as Hague writes, is 'reflective and philosophical. He is an "ongoing philosopher" who is intent on discovering what is around him,' going on to point out Jake's 'almost mythical belief in his "destiny".'[565]

At the novel's conclusion Murdoch returns Jake to much the same place as he was at its beginning: he returns to Mrs Tinckham's shop, still homeless, still poor – 'just about as much cash to my name as I had had when I left Earls Court Road at the beginning of this story,'[566] and he has lost Finn although, (for now) gained the dog Mr Mars. At the same time however, it is evident just how much Jake has changed throughout the course of the novel. He tells us:

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[561] R. L. Widmann, 'Murdoch's *Under the Net*: Theory and Practice of Fiction,' *Critique*, Vol. X, No. 1 (1967), p.14.
[562] *Under the Net*, p.256.
[563] Heusel, *Iris Murdoch's Paradoxical Novels*, p.80.
[564] Nicol, p.91.
[565] Hague, pp.213 and 215.
[566] *Under The Net*, p.282.

> It was the first day of the world. I was full of that strength which is better than happiness, better than the weak wish for happiness which women can awaken in a man to rot his fibres. It was the morning of the first day.[567]

The action of the novel happens over little more than a week but Jake has discovered and learnt much, as his sense of self-renewal evinces.[568] This is of the utmost importance for the circular, self-begetting narrative as it demonstrates exactly how Jake has come to the point where he is able to begin writing his own novel; he has had to dispel all of his misconceived notions about the world around him and accept his part in it. He comes to realise that he cannot know or understand everything; as George Watson writes, Murdoch insists that the world 'is not a single pattern of meaning…knowing is not limited to explanations.'[569] Importantly he does not try and rationalise or even explain the occurrence of the mixed litter of kittens – the novel ends with his acceptance of the bizarre and inexplicable – Jake concludes 'I don't know why it is…it's just one of the wonders of the world.'[570] Having sought to find a pattern in life and, in realising that enforcing such order and structure, such 'planned ways of life are nets, traps, no matter how carefully or rationally the net is woven…none of these narrow paths really work,'[571] Jake is forced to revisit the origins of his story in order to observe the chaos of life and, this time, accept it for what it is. This is comparable to what Anna Wulf decides to do with her life narrative in Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*.

Lessing's Anna, a writer suffering from writer's block, starts four separate notebooks – black, red, yellow, and blue – each confronting a different part of her world. Anna sets out

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[567] Ibid, p.283.
[568] This is similar to Fleur's discreetly different accounts of the grave-yard scene, found at the beginning and end of *Loitering With Intent*.
[569] George Watson, 'Iris Murdoch and the Net of Theory,' *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998), p.500.
[570] *Under The Net*, p.286.
[571] James Gindin, 'Images of Illusion in the Work of Iris Murdoch,' *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer, 1960), p.180.

believing that only by fragmenting herself in this way can she come to deal with the issues that plague her. However, as Grace Stewart observes, this does not work as she intended, eventually becoming 'a golden notebook created from the knowledge that truth spills over and cannot be contained in pigeonholes of blue, black, yellow, and red.'[572] *The Golden Notebook* is symmetrically structured, each section falls into a pattern framed by Anna's position as a novelist. The first of five sections of 'Free Women' an autobiographical, realistic narrative detailing the lives of Anna, her friend Molly, their friends, family, and associates, begins the novel, followed by the black, red, yellow then blue notebooks. The pattern is repeated three times and then the cycle is broken by 'The Golden Notebook,' the point at which Anna's system breaks down and all her worlds bleed into an amalgam. The final section is the last instalment of 'Free Women,' which concludes with Anna's decision to become a social worker, to join the labour party and to teach; as Molly quips, Anna is 'to be integrated with British life at its roots.'[573] We know that ultimately Anna beats her writer's block to author *The Golden Notebook* because we see her lover Saul give her the first line of her new novel:

> 'I'm going to give you the first sentence then. There are the two women you are, Anna. Write down: The two women were alone in the London flat.'
> 'You want me to begin a novel with The two women were alone in the London flat?'
> 'Why say it like that? Write it, Anna.'
>
> I wrote it.[574]

This is the very sentence with which *The Golden Notebook* begins; according to Tonya Krouse, the issue of Saul having produced it rather than Anna means that the 'sovereignty of

[572] Stewart, *A New Mythos*, p.39.
[573] *The Golden Notebook*, p.638.
[574] Ibid, p.615.

one unified "author" over the text is radically and concretely undermined. In this, *The Golden Notebook* imagines a postmodern alternative to modernist conceptions of authorial agency and authority.'[575] The presence within the text of so many authorial figures – such as Saul, the various different Annas from within each separate notebook, Anna's fictional creation Ella who is also a novelist, and of course Lessing herself – go towards making what Clare Sprague and Virginia Tiger have described as a 'hall of mirrors,'[576] further distorting the issue of authority and adding to the chaos of the text. The multiple authors and multiple texts that go to make up *The Golden Notebook* function in a different way to the palimpsestic nature of *The Alexandria Quartet*. Rather than writing and rewriting as a process of artistic development and a search for truth, *The Golden Notebook* demonstrates and examines the fragmentation of the author's psyche (as well as the fragmented nature of modern life) and the chaos inherent in the creative process. Anna believes that by dividing up the various parts of her life – her past, her politics and ideologies, her writing, her position in society as a woman, a mother and an author – she will be able to resolve her problems. She tells her therapist Mrs Marks, aka 'Mother Sugar':

> 'I want to be able to separate in myself what is old and cyclical, the recurring history, the myth, from what is new, what I feel or think might be new…'[577]

The notebooks, which are supposed to break Anna's creative block by letting her embrace her fragmented self, end up restricting her further in what Rachel Blau DuPlessis calls 'acts of containment.'[578] Anna has allowed the genre in which each of the notebooks is written to define what she comes to write; it is only through *The Golden Notebook* as a whole that the reader comes to see how Anna and Lessing actually need to breach the boundaries of the

[575] Tonya Krose, 'Freedom as Effacement in "The Golden Notebook": Theorizing Pleasure, Subjectivity, and Authority,' *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Spring, 2006), p.49.
[576] Clare Sprague and Virginia Tiger, 'Introduction,' in ed. Sprague and Tiger, *Critical Essays on Doris Lessing* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co, 1986), p.3.
[577] *The Golden Notebook*, p.459.
[578] DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending*, p.101.

conventional, generic novel form, allowing the notebooks and the styles of writing each represents to merge. In this way, writes Sydney Janet Kaplan, the 'very structure of *The Golden Notebook*, with its innumerable stories within stories, expresses what Doris Lessing meant by her comment that "the shape of this book should be enclosed and claustrophobic – so narcissistic that the subject matter must break through the form.'[579] The form of the novel – multiple, jostling narratives – comes to represent the content and allows Lessing to escape from the confines of the traditional novel; the final 'Golden Notebook' allows Anna to literally (and literarily) put all the pieces of herself back together. Part of Lessing's dissatisfaction comes from the neat and orderly way experience is transmuted into fiction. In her celebrated introductory note to the novel she writes:

> How little I have managed to say of the truth, how little I have caught of all that complexity; how can this small neat thing be true when what I experienced was so rough and apparently formless and unshaped.[580]

Lessing articulates her need to address the process by which 'great raw hunks of undigested experience,'[581] are translated into fiction, and she explicitly addressed this with the so-called straight narrative of 'Free Women,' which is designed to reflect the inadequacy of the conventional women's novel. By embedding 'Free Women' within the novel Lessing uses the notebooks to demonstrate how the process that goes towards the creation of a fiction can bring the narrative to life. Bernard Bergonzi notes that the process of the Chinese-box style narration:

> Enables us to see (a) how far this novel reflects Anna's own experience, as described in the blue notebook, and the intercalated series of 'straight'

[579] Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Feminine Consciousness in the Modern British Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), p.163.
[580] *The Golden Notebook*, p.14.
[581] Joan Didion, 'Briefing for a Descent into Hell,' in *Critical Essays on Doris Lessing*, p.195.

> narrative; and (b) how muffled, unfocused and generally inferior this draft novel is to Anna's direct accounts of her own experience…traditionally the novelist is supposed to transform the raw stuff of his experience into art, but Anna comes increasingly to feel that this is distortion and evasion.[582]

The Chinese-box/Russian doll structure of *The Golden Notebook* allows the form of the novel to reflect the process of artistic creation, peeling away the layers of fictionality to the core experience. Anna writes, 'now, writing it, and reading what I've written, there's nothing there, just words on paper, I can't communicate,'[583] reflecting the impossibility of trying to convey the wholeness of her experience in writing, displaying the limitations of the novelist. Somerset Maugham's narrator functions in a similar way, although he has a much less active role within *The Razor's Edge* than Anna does in *The Golden Notebook*. The narrator[584] concludes his story of Larry Darrell with the admission that there is still much that he does not, indeed cannot know, about his subject:

> This is conjecture. I am of the earth, earthy; I can only admire the radiance of such a rare creature, I cannot step into his shoes and enter into his innermost heart as I sometimes think I can do with persons more nearly allied to the common run of man.[585]

Of course Maugham, as the creator of the fictional Larry, is perfectly positioned to do exactly what he tells us he cannot – he created him, therefore he *should* indeed be free to walk in his shoes and enter his innermost heart. However, despite creating Larry, Maugham subverts the position of the all-knowing author by admitting his inability to understand Larry, a character who is not of 'the common run of man.' His position in the novel is therefore limited to that of

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[582] Bernard Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1970), p.203.
[583] *The Golden Notebook*, p.568.
[584] To whom I shall refer throughout as Mr. Maugham in order to distinguish him from Maugham, the author.
[585] W. Somerset Maugham, *The Razor's Edge* (London: Vintage, 2000), p.340.

the storyteller – a frame through which the disparate plotlines can be brought together, allowing the reader to come to his own conclusions in a novel whose primary theme can be seen as the 'pursuit of knowledge… [and] determined quest, this mythic search for the truth.'[586] Maugham is admitting that the novelist is perhaps not the best positioned to uncover the truth, he simply describes what he sees and what he hears, thus his narrator is akin to the oral storyteller offering his version of events but declining to pass judgement upon the characters whose stories he tells. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh relates Maugham's narratorial stance in this novel to what she sees as its source material, the ancient Indian text the Katha-Upanishad. She writes that:

> *The Razor's Edge* is also set up as a dialogue between the author and his characters. The novelist is right inside his own novel, on the same plane as his fictional characters…there is an implicit stylistic link between the ancient Indian scripture and Maugham's own imaginative creation…playing the role of Hermes…the go-between of gods and men, Maugham translates, analyses, and elucidates the ancient Sanskrit text…takes up the task of explicating and articulating the complex theme of transcendence and immanence present in the classic Hindu text.[587]

Although, as Hastings (amongst others) has remarked, both the title of the novel and its epigraph are taken from the Katha-Upanishad – 'the sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say the path to Salvation is hard'[588] – Singh provides no evidence that Maugham's novel was inspired by anything more than this single quotation. However her reading of Maugham as playing the go-between of gods and men does accord with the actions

[586] Walter Abish, 'The Writer-to-Be: An Impression of Living,' *SubStance*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1980), p.102.
[587] Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, 'Crossing the Razor's Edge: Somerset Maugham and Hindu Philosophy,' *Durham University Journal*, Vol. 87, No. 2 (1995), pp.330-39.
[588] Hastings, *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham*, p.469.

of the narrator. Mr. Maugham's role in the novel is similar to that of both Philip Carey in *Of Human Bondage* (1915) and Ashenden in *Cakes and Ale*, although he is somewhat more detached from the action and less personable than in these previous novels. The effect of having a narrator who is barely distinguishable from Maugham himself is that, as a representation of the real Maugham, he is automatically elevated from narrator to someone set above and outside of the narrative. Therefore he is able then to look upon the action of the novel from a position of authority which he uses to 'put a distance between the reader and the characters he describes,'[589] making the reader all the time aware, despite Maugham's assertions to the contrary, of the innate fictionality of the story. This narrative device is designed to at once draw attention to the process of fiction writing and storytelling, whilst at the same time demanding that the reader suspend their sense of reality to become immersed in the story: integral to the nature of fiction. Mr. Maugham's frequent interjections throughout the novel, which place him amongst the characters, such as 'during the next four weeks I saw little of Elliott,' 'I was in London then,' 'A week or so after I had so unexpectedly run into Larry,' and, 'my little party did not do too badly,'[590] act to reinforce his position as a filter for the reader. We see nothing of the action that he does not directly translate for us, as he says at the beginning of the novel:

> I have taken the liberty…to put into the mouths of persons of my narrative speeches that I did not myself hear and could not possibly have heard. I have done this for the same reasons as the historians have, to give liveliness and verisimilitude to scenes that would have been ineffective if they had merely been recounted. I want to be read and I think I am justified in doing what I can

[589] Isabel Colegate, 'From Detachment to Further Detachment,' *The Threepenny Review*, No. 99 (Autumn, 2004), p.18.
[590] *The Razor's Edge*, pp.90;135;193;228.

> to make my book readable. The intelligent reader will easily see for himself where I have used this artifice, and he is at perfect liberty to reject it.[591]

The repetition of the word 'liberty' forces us to question the nature of this liberty: both the liberty of the novelist – Maugham inventing dialogue for his (supposedly 'real') characters; and the liberty of the reader – to reject the writer's use of fabrication. Humour stems from the irony of this passage: of course the reader is free to reject, but they have no way of knowing what is real and what is not (in any case it is all fiction) and there is no actual alternative should they reject the narrative, except to stop reading. The liberty of the reader is therefore a ruse, the liberty lies with the writer. This statement of Maugham's represents the art of his fiction: that of taking reality and enhancing it. He presents this idea to the reader in such a way as to make it sound as if he is unique amongst authors in doing so; the novel becomes a metaphor for the whole process of writing fiction, with his constant interjections demonstrating to the reader exactly how present he really is, despite drawing himself as a character who is supposed to be very much on the sidelines. In this way Maugham exemplifies one of the key ways in which the novelist-character can be used, not only to provide a unifying structure and a frame-narrative, but to allow the text's form to stand for its thematic concerns. Both the circularity of the self-begetting narrative, and the divergent narrative levels of the frame structure, come to represent the way in which each author has chosen to convey the message of narrative and novelistic development to the reader, each novel's structure reflecting the story of its own birth and its reasons for being written.

[591] Ibid, p.2.

V. 'A SELF-EVIDENT SHAM'

Metafiction and Authorship in Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and Martin Amis's *Money*

> The modern novel should be largely a work of reference. Most authors spend their time saying what has been said before – usually said much better. A wealth of references to existing works would acquaint the reader instantaneously with the nature of each character, would obviate tiresome explanations and would effectively preclude mountebanks, upstarts, thimbleriggers and persons of inferior education from an understanding of contemporary literature. Conclusion of explanation.[592]

> 'Is there a moral philosophy of fiction? When I create a character and put him or her through certain ordeals, what am I up to – morally? Am I accountable.'[593]

Although written forty-five years apart, both O'Brien and Amis's novels do what the novelist Kingsley Amis accused his son of doing in *Money*: of 'breaking the rules, buggering about with the reader.'[594] The 'rules' Kingsley Amis talks about are those that supposedly exist between reader and writer, meaning that the writer is bound to uphold the illusion of reality the novel provides the reader. This section, which will focus primarily on O'Brien's novel, explores how metafiction is used to compound the fictionality of the novel form and how the

[592] Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.25.
[593] Martin Amis, *Money* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.260.
[594] Mira Stout, 'Martin Amis: Down London's Mean Streets,' *The New York Times*, February 4, 1990. Accessed 04/09/2013 http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/02/01/home/amis-stout.html

novelist-character functions within these novels. Of course, by definition, all the novels under discussion in this thesis may be classed as metafictional as the novelist-character forces a degree of self-reflexivity: thus engaging with Patricia Waugh's definition of metafiction as:

> A term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text.[595]

Otherwise known as the anti-novel, in that it defies the usual conventions of the novel, metafictional texts expose their status as constructed fictions, thus challenging the supposed mimetic function of the novel. It is this conceit that O'Brien questions in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, whose essence, Anne Clissmann observes, 'lies in its attack on the idea that any one literary form can be said to portray reality.'[596] Many critical discussions of *At Swim-Two-Birds* have made mention of O'Brien's reference to Aldous Huxley in the opening pages of the novel, to the effect that O'Brien acts upon Huxley's famous suggestion from *Point Counter Point*: 'put a novelist in the novel.'[597]

> I had arranged a number of books. Each of them was generally recognized as indispensable to all who aspire to an appreciation of the nature of contemporary literature and my small collection contained works ranging from those of Mr Joyce to the widely read books of Mr A. Huxley, the eminent English writer.[598]

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[595] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p.2.
[596] Anne Clissmann, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to his Writings, The Story-teller's Book-web* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), p.95.
[597] *Point Counter Point*, p.385.
[598] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.11.

The inclusion of Huxley in the novelist-narrator's personal library, especially the mention of his widely read books (which is perhaps also a light-hearted dig at the unreadability and unpopularity of Joyce's novels) is perhaps a nod to Huxley. However O'Brien takes Huxley's suggestion – 'why draw the line at one novelist inside your novel? Why not a second inside his?'[599] – even further than Huxley himself: the novelist-narrator in *At Swim-Two-Birds* is just one metafictional device amongst many; as the frame narrator he in turn is writing a novel about a novelist, Dermot Trellis, who is also writing a novel. These Russian doll novelist-characters allow O'Brien to present myriad juxtaposed literary styles (Clissmann counts thirty-six[600]) and to introduce a wealth of issues through which he may give comment upon the nature of fiction as the novel's disparate sections flip back and forth between the student narrator's everyday life, his manuscript about Trellis, and the goings on at Trellis's Red Swan Hotel where the despotic author is joined by a chorus of characters borrowed (or stolen) from various fiction, Irish folklore and mythological sources:

> He is compelling all his characters to live with him in the Red Swan Hotel so he can keep an eye on them and see that there is no boozing…most of them are characters used in other books, chiefly the books of another great writer called Tracy. There is a cowboy in Room 13 and Mr McCool, a hero of old Ireland, is on the floor above. The cellar is full of leprechauns.[601]

The coexistence and interplay between the many different literary influences O'Brien evokes reflect the inherently intertextual nature of all fiction, placing the reader at the heart of what Clissmann refers to as a 'book-web,'[602] charged with deciphering the meanings imbued by each textual reference. In this way, suggests Kimberley Bohman-Kalaja, O'Brien 'posits inter-

[599] *Point Counter Point*, p.385
[600] Clissmann, p.86.
[601] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.35.
[602] Ibid, p.90.

textuality as a form of dialogue with an informed reader…it is a game in which the reader's success requires recognizing, identifying and contextualizing at least fourteen old and middle Irish works.'[603] O'Brien's choice of diverse texts – from cowboy stories, to Irish myth, to modernist literature in his parody/pastiche of Joyce's *A Portrait* – demonstrates an enmeshing of high and low cultures**,** in which neither is given dominance over the other. By reworking tales from the *Fiannaidheacht* and *Buile Suibhne* with contemporary fiction, O'Brien demonstrates the significance of placing ancient and modern texts into a dialogue, which as Denell Downum notes, 'serve to bring the stories into relationship with one another, showing how storytelling begets storytelling as words and themes move from Finn to the other characters and back again.'[604] The fragmented structure of *At Swim-Two-Birds* complements this movement between frames and texts, permitting confusion about the supposed authoring of various sections to abound. Joseph Brooker comments that 'it cuts frequently back and forth between the "frame" story and the fictional worlds that lie within it; it multiplies and leaves uncertain the number of fictional worlds which coexist on a given level.'[605] This can be best illustrated by Brinsley's comment to the narrator about some of the characters:

> He had expressed his inability to distinguish between Furriskey, Lamont and Shanahan, bewailed what he termed their spiritual and physical identity, stated true dialogue is dependent on the conflict rather than the confluence of minds and made reference to the importance of characterization in contemporary literary works of a high-class, advanced or literary nature. The three of them, he said, might make one man between them.[606]

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[603] Kimberley Bohman-Kalaja, 'The Truth is an Odd Number: At Swim-Two-Birds,' in ed. Jennika Baines, *'Is It About A Bicycle?: Flann O'Brien in the Twenty-First Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), p.56
[604] Denell Downum, 'Citation and Spectrality in Flann O'Brien "At Swim-Two-Birds",' *Irish University Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Autumn-Winter, 2006), p.310.
[605] Joseph Brooker, *Flann O'Brien* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005), p.29.
[606] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, pp.160-61.

The disorganised structure obviously intended by O'Brien can be further evinced by the fact that although the book begins with a seeming adherence to tradition, after 'Chapter I' no subsequent chapter headings follow. Sue Asbee notes that 'when Penguin brought out the first paperback edition, this heading was omitted, presumably because Penguin decided it was an error.'[607] The lack of distinct chapters reinforces the narrator's views about the inefficiency of conventional form:

> One beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with. A good book may have three openings entirely dissimilar and inter-related only in the prescience of the author, or for that matter one hundred times as many endings.[608]

Of course several critics, including Christine Brooke-Rose, have noted with irony that 'it is technically impossible to have more than one beginning to the narrative.'[609] These comic incursions serve to remind the reader of O'Brien's intent – to prove the novel *is* merely 'a self-evident sham'[610] – drawing attention to the artificial nature of fiction, directing the reader's 'attention to the movement of the novel's machinery. Rather than conceal its art, *At Swim-Two-Birds* amplifies the clanking of its ropes, pulleys, and scaffolding.'[611] This observation fits Keith Hopper's pronouncement of O'Brien as the 'Holy Ghost in the machine' of an Irish trinity which projects 'Joyce the father and Beckett the son.'[612]

Like Lessing's *Golden Notebook*, *At Swim-Two-Birds* presents an impression of structure through the framing narrative, the ten 'biographical reminiscences' of the narrator, which en-

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[607] Sue Asbee, *Flann O'Brien* (Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1991), p.31.
[608] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.9.
[609] Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.114.
[610] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.25.
[611] Thomas Shea, *Flann O'Brien's Exorbitant Novels* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992), p.57.
[612] Keith Hopper, *Flann O'Brien: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Postmodernist* Second Edition (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), p.xiv.

close the remainder of the narratives. Critics, including Asbee, Brooker, and Rüdiger Imhof, have termed this a Chinese box structure, as discussed in the previous section, although Thomas Shea argues that 'the image of a Chinese box structure falsely tames the wildness of the text.'[613] Undoubtedly the chaotic form of the novel is intended to mirror its content, allowing O'Brien to reflect an alternative realism in the disorder of modern life in a manner totally divergent with the realist novel's depiction of reality. It also reflected the interests of its author at the time of composition, as J. C. C. Mays writes, 'the original version was, according to Niall Sheridan, less a book than a territory to which Brian O'Nolan retreated to develop as he would a multitude of themes that interested him.'[614] Sheridan, the model for Brinsley, was responsible for editing the manuscript down from over eight-hundred pages after O'Brien 'had got such fun out of sending-up the Fenian cycle that he over-indulged.' [615]

One effect of the unruly structure of the novel (especially towards its conclusion) is that at times the narrative levels[616] become confused and it is not always easy to tell which character is writing/narrating. Clissmann counters this concern with 'often it doesn't really matter.'[617] Prior to the writing of *At Swim-Two-Birds,* O'Brien had discussed the possibility of a creating 'The Great Irish Novel,' a collaborative work with Sheridan and other members of his circle at University College Dublin. The novel was to be called 'The Children of Destiny,' and Hopper writes that 'the team effort held obvious comforts for the lazy writer, but it was also intended to prevent the dictatorial presence of the single author-god from asserting his will over the fictional domain.'[618] Arguably the cacophony of narrative voices at play within *At Swim-Two-Birds* is something of a nod to this idea of collaborative authorship; after all, it is Trellis's autocratic mode of authorship that is punished by the rebellion of his characters. The confusion

[613] Shea, p.58.
[614] J. C. C. Mays, 'Brian O'Nolan: Literalist of the Imagination,' in ed. Timothy O'Keefe, *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan* (London: Martin Brian & O'Keefe, 1973), p.85.
[615] Niall Sheridan, 'Brian, Flann and Myles,' in O'Keefe, p.47
[616] Bohman-Kalaja counts twelve narrators and twelve principle narrative strands (Baines, p.51).
[617] Clissmann, p.86.
[618] Hopper, p.36.

of narrative levels disrupts the frame structure, as Shea has suggested, in which the narrator writes about Trellis who writes about the goings on at the Red Swan; when his characters revolt they commission his son Orlick[619] to write against Trellis. Brooker argues that this undermines the reader's perception of writing:

> The conceit has been that one character (A) writes about another (B), who writes about another (C): each narrator having authority befitting an author. But Orlick's narrative exploits the conditionals that pertain within the student's novel: the ontological plane which Trellis and his minions share…yet the process that now occurs is anything but everyday: it requires us to shift our conception of how writing works.[620]

The rupture of the framing narrative destroys the notion that any one of the narrative levels has any dominance over any other in the same way that juxtaposing characters from ancient myth and contemporary fiction removes any form of fictional precedence. It also shows that the narrator's day-to-day life, which appears a more 'realistic' style of writing than the other sections of the narrative, is equally fictive. Asbee observes that 'O'Brien's point was that whatever style he employed in whatever part of his book was precisely that: a style of writing. Each extract is as fictional as any other.'[621] By conflating the levels of fiction the novel questions the artificial nature of even the most 'straight' literary realism, something that seems to have been paramount to O'Brien's idea for the novel, to expose what Ninian Mellamphy refers to as 'the inadequacy or adolescence of the shams of plot, plausibility, temporality and causality, the sham verisimilitude of realism and naturalism.'[622] Mellamphy goes on to explain that

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[619] Orlick's mother is one of Trellis' fictional creations, thus his status as a fictional on non-fictional character is called into question.
[620] Brooker, p.36.
[621] Asbee, p.34.
[622] Ninian Mellamphy, 'Aestho-autogamy and the Anarchy of Imagination: Flann O'Brien's Theory of Fiction in *At Swim-Two-Birds*,' in ed., Rüdiger Imhof, *Alive-Alive O! Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985), p.147.

O'Brien's purpose for *At Swim-Two-Birds* was to show that whilst traditional realism was unable to represent reality his text, in all its seeming disarray, did a better job because it admitted that 'reality involves the whole range of human perception, observation, cogitation, memory and, above all, desire…it attests to the reality of the unrealizable by attempting to crystalize in its form the interplay of man's poor actualities and his poor dreams, the worlds of facts and wonder.'[623] In other words, the chaos of the novel emphasises that reality is not itself neat and ordered. This concept that O'Brien seemingly espouses throughout the novel is at odds with the ending, which sees the narrator pass his university exams and receive the approval of his uncle, along with the gift of a watch. This unexpected gift totally changes the narrator's perception of his uncle, contrasting directly with earlier descriptions:

> *Description of my uncle*: Rat-brained, cunning, concerned-that-he-should-be-well-thought-of. Abounding in pretence, deceit. Holder of Guinness clerkship the third class.[624]

And after receiving the watch:

> *Description of my uncle*: Simple, well-intentioned; pathetic in humility; responsible member of a large commercial concern…
>
> My uncle had evinced unsuspected traits of character and had induced in me an emotion of surprise and contrition extremely difficult of literary rendition or description.[625]

The change in the narrator's attitude towards his uncle is compounded by his sudden difficulty in describing his feelings in words, which relates to a diminishing of his powers of literary composition. The symbolic watch which restores order and imposes time on the previously

[623] Ibid, p.148.
[624] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.30.
[625] Ibid, p.215.

undisciplined narrator marks his acceptance of the real, official world of linear time, totally at odds with the 'playtime' of the narrative. Henry Merritt states that 'the gift of time leads both O'Brien and the narrator to silence and conclusion. The narrator can now end his text…make his text linear…Ireland, time and adulthood have been accepted.'[626] Many critics discuss this ending in relation to that of Joyce's in *A Portrait,* where Stephen, unlike the narrator here, refuses to accept country, church and family and chooses flight. Asbee, for example, cites Anthony Cronin's argument, 'that because Stephen renounces family, state, and religion, O'Brien's protagonist, by contrast, must be reconciled.'[627] Following the narrator's surprise change of heart, the '*Conclusion of the book, ultimate*' introduces a new narrative voice, coming after the final instalment of the Trellis narrative. The reader is left with a philosophical discussion of numbers, told that 'evil is even, truth is an odd number and death is a full stop,'[628] before the strange 'case of the poor German who was very fond of three,'[629] and the final three words, 'good-bye, good-bye, good-bye'[630] but the final summative paragraph is a reflection on madness, and the lingering image is that of Sweeny. Sweeny, the mad king of the *Buile Suibhne* is, for many scholars of O'Brien, an alternate to the Icarus myth that Joyce evokes through Stephen Dedalus. Cursed to take to the trees, bird-like, Sweeny's flight across Ireland and from his own mind is symbolic of poetic suffering:

> Sweeny in the trees hears the sad baying as he sits listening on the branch, a huddle between the earth and heaven.[631]

Sweeny, writes Clissmann, 'is O'Brien's final unifying image…he represents man caught between reality and imagination, yet creating intricate and melodious evocations of the world

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[626] Henry Merritt, 'Games, Ending and Dying in Flann O'Brien's "At Swim-Two-Birds",' *Irish University Review*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Autumn - Winter, 1995), pp.315-6.
[627] Asbee, p.32.
[628] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.216.
[629] Ibid, p.217.
[630] Ibid, p.218.
[631] Ibid, p.216.

about him to compensate for his loneliness, pain and the burden of consciousness.'[632] But Sweeny, like the narrator and unlike Stephen, has accepted his place, the place of the poet in the trees: between heaven and earth. Although he undoubtedly admired Joyce, O'Brien was cynical of high modernist literature's treatment of 'the man in the street.' In the Red Swan narrative O'Brien deploys the characters Paul Shanahan, Anthony Lamont, John Furriskey, and the people's poet Jem Casey to argue the position and importance of the man on the street in literature:

> The real old stuff of the native land, you know, the stuff that brought scholars to our shore…the stuff that put our country where she stands today…but the man in the street, where does he come in? By God he doesn't come in at all as far as I can see.[633]

O'Brien's own use of Irish myth and folktale as scaffolding for his novel contrasts with Joyce's use of classical Greek mythology; O'Brien uses this to provide a 'comic critique of modernist novels that have little interest for the common reader.'[634] *At Swim-Two-Birds* has often been seen as little more than a direct parody of Joyce's writing, particularly the use of the student narrator's similarities to Stephen. Unlike Stephen's self-elevated theories of art, the narrator is aware of his place within literary and cultural history, 'he can claim no autonomous, much less superior, position for the literary creator.'[635] Stephen's conceit that the artist should be undetectable within and above the text is also mocked by O'Brien's blatant mirroring of the life of the narrator within the text. For example, in the pub with Kelly, the narrator is told 'a pint of plain is your only man,'[636] which becomes the refrain of Jem Casey's poem within the manuscript. O'Brien is openly acknowledging that life has a direct bearing on

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[632] Clissmann, p.150.
[633] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.75.
[634] Asbee, p.44.
[635] Kim McMullam, 'Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition,' *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Autumn, 1993), p.72.
[636] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.22.

art, dramatizing the conditions of composition, by having the narrator transcribe his daily life and conversations with friends into his fiction. This in turn mirrors O'Brien's process in writing, as 'Sheridan recounts the way in which his discussions of the manuscript of *At Swim-Two-Birds* with O'Brien would turn up in further instalments of the book as conversations between the narrator and Brinsley.'[637] Certainly there is an element of the autobiographical in O'Brien's rendition of the narrator, which is complicated by his namelessness. There are several theories as to why O'Brien chose not to name the novelist-narrator – to contrast him with Stephen; to deny the reader identification with that narrator; to enable him to represent the everyman – however I argue that it is in order that he be equated with the oral tradition, 'the open communal character of the medieval Gaelic literary tradition: without known authorship for the most part; capable of renewal and increase by the collusion of poet and public.'[638] The importance of the oral tradition is evident in characters like Finn MacCool and Sweeny, both of whom represent differing facets of authorship and the regard with which the storyteller was held in Irish culture. In discussing these differences Eva Wäppling points to the discrepancy between the oral and written traditions in Irish literature; 'there were two Finn traditions, different not so much in content but in form and spirit. The oral tradition pictured Finn as a comic, sometimes rather burlesque, old man. The learned, or manuscript, tradition was more closely constructed in poetic or rhetorical language and was characterized more by the heroic and prophetic Finn.'[639] O'Brien's depiction of Finn falls somewhere between the two, for although we are told that Finn is a 'better man than God,'[640] he is also lampooned by the other characters for being too discursive – he is interrupted by Shanahan, causing him to recount that 'in the yesterday…the man who mixed his utterance with the honeywords of Finn was the first

[637] David Cohen, 'An Anatomy of the Novel: Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds,' *Twentieth Century Literature,* Vol. 39, No. 2 (Summer, 1993), p.225.
[638] P. L. Henry, 'The Structure of Flann O'Brien's "At Swim-Two-Birds",' *Irish University Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring, 1990), p.36.
[639] Eva Wäppling, *Four Irish Legendary Figures in At Swim-Two-Birds: A Study of Flann O'Brien's use of Finn, Suibhne, the Pooka and the Good Fairy* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1984), p.32.
[640] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.19.

day put naked into the tree'[641] as punishment. Finn's awareness of the disparity in his treatment is obvious, he feels that he:

> Is without honour…twisted and tortured for the weaving of a story-teller's book-web. Who but a book-poet would dishonour the God-big Finn for the sake of a gap-worded story?[642]

Finn's distrust of the writers who have moulded his story to meet their own narrative ends demonstrates O'Brien's decision not to award his novelist-character authority over the text, which is accentuated by his namelessness. Instead, O'Brien wants to open it up to the reader to interpret – allowing him/her to recognise each of the intertexts to which *At Swim-Two-Birds* is indebted, demonstrating a plurivocal, collective composition akin to oral traditions. With regard to authorial control the narrator is contrasted with Stephen, but also with Trellis, who pays the price for exerting his authorial powers when his characters hold a trial to determine how he should be punished. Whilst Trellis has a lucky escape when pages of his manuscript are burnt, thus freeing him, through him O'Brien interrogates the concept of authorial power and control, although, as Downum points out, O'Brien himself:

> Does not give up that control altogether. Furriskey, Shanahan, and the rest rebel against the fictional Trellis; clearly they do so at the command of their and Trellis's mutual author, Flann O'Brien. By acknowledging the criminality inherent in writing, O'Brien illuminates the dilemma of the writer who cannot fully cede authority and yet who also understands the false premises upon which that authority rests. Thus it is the condition of the writer to occupy the threshold between opposing spaces.[643]

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[641] Ibid, p.72.
[642] Ibid, p.19.
[643] Downum, p.319.

In a similar way Amis, as author and fictional character, occupies opposing spaces within *Money*. In the opening note which frames *Money*, signed M. A., as in *London Fields*, we are told that this novel is a suicide note. However, as we know John Self doesn't actually commit suicide at the end, are we to conclude that this 'M. A.' gets the outcome wrong, thus rupturing the frame – which is supported by the Amis character's reaction to Self in the final pages – or else that we have been misled, along with the fictional Amis deceived by the author Amis, who knew all along that Self wouldn't die. This relates to the question Amis asks about the author's moral responsibility, quoted at the beginning of the section. Amis, in discussion with his narrator John Self, questions the author's power to manipulate his characters (and also his readers?) but also his ethical right to do so:

> The distance between author and narrator corresponds to the degree to which the author finds the narrator wicked, deluded, pitiful or ridiculous…the further down the scale he is, the more liberties you can take with him. You can do what the hell you like to him, really. This creates an appetite for punishment. The author is not free of sadistic impulses.[644]

Amis's presence in the text as a named character, a character with the author's own name, not only destabilizes the boundaries of the text, the 'rules'[645] between reader and writer and text as construction, it also lessens the likelihood that the reader might equate author and narrator. In fact, according to Dern, Amis has joked that he placed this version of himself within the text 'primarily to differentiate himself from his narrator, to distance the author from his salacious creation.'[646] The character of Amis acts in a similar way to O'Brien's narrator, his intrusions are like the biographical reminiscences in the frame narrative in that they show the reader what processes are taking place, exposing the mechanisms; so when the Amis character phi-

[644] Amis, *Money*, pp.246-47.
[645] Which may also be seen to constitute a frame – one that supposedly governs the actions of the writer.
[646] Dern, *Martians, Monsters and Madonna*, p.91.

losophises about the novelist's sadistic impulses he is removing the blame the reader has previously placed on the gross John Self by telling us the author controls the character, making him act in certain ways. Of course, as with O'Brien, there is a fair amount of game-playing (exemplified by the chess game 'Martin Amis' and John Self play) going on within *Money*. Amis portrays his fictional self modestly (as seen through the eyes of Self) as 'small, compact, wears his rug fairly long'[647] and as Self, a slob himself, observes he 'lives like a student.'[648] Brian Finney notes that Self sees him as 'anachronistic, someone who has failed to come to terms with the pre-eminent need to maximise his income…he also comes across to Self as an out-of-touch intellectual.'[649]

Amis no doubt greatly enjoyed the effect he knew the intrusion of the Amis character would have upon the reader, as it did on his father. But Amis, like O'Brien, is aware of the limits of authorial control: at the end of *Money* Martin Amis and Self run into each other in a pub and the Amis character is surprised to see him:

> *'Hey what are you doing here?' he asked. 'You're meant to be out of the picture by now.' I just glanced over my shoulder and said – I don't know why: some deep yob gene must have prompted me –* 'Fuck *off out of it.' In the bendy mirror behind the bar I saw him leave, woodenly, stung, scared.*[650]

The novel's subtitle 'a suicide note' tells the reader that Self was intended to kill himself, but he doesn't: Self's survival means that he defies authorial control and so ruptures the frame narrative, which *At Swim-Two-Birds* also does in its final refusal to give precedence to any one narrative strand. Although the embedded narratives have appeared to fit within the student

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[647] *Money*, p.87.
[648] Ibid, p.237.
[649] Finney, *Martin Amis*, p.48.
[650] *Money*, p389.

narrator's frame story, with which the novel begins, the '*Conclusion of the book, ultimate*'[651] demonstrates a breach in the frame narrative as it does not end with the student. His story concludes as he accepts linear time, as denoted by his observation that his new watch is a little slow – 'my watch told me that the time was five fifty-four. At the same time I heard the Angelus pealing out from far away.'[652] This comes even before the '*Conclusion of the Book, penultimate*,'[653] in which the servant Teresa burns Trellis's manuscript, which ends with Trellis quoting the Latin phrase 'Ars est celare artem'[654] – art is to conceal art – and wondering whether this is a pun. As Booker points out this is nod to an existing Chaucerian pun but also 'the original Latin phrase already contains an embedded pun, since "celare" (to hide) resonates with "caelare" (to engrave, i.e., make obvious).'[655] The embedded narratives, as well as the range of additional metafictional techniques, employed in *At Swim-Two-Birds* accentuate the both the intertextual nature and storytelling aspect of fiction but also the fragmentary, open-ended and on-going nature of fiction as dialogue.

[651] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.216
[652] Ibid, p.215.
[653] Ibid.
[654] Ibid, p.216.
[655] M. Keith Booker, *Techniques of Subversion in Modern Literature: Transgression, Abjection, and the Carnivalesque* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991), p.28.

VI. CONCLUSION

This chapter has set out to explore the use of the novelist-character in novels where the character performs as part of a framing narrative; the novelist-character produces the story of how the novel came to be written, which frames the action of the novel. The embedded narrative – or story-within-a-story – accentuates self-conscious storytelling inherent in fiction. The novelist-character as framing device is often compounded by additional literary devices – such as the unreliable narrators in *London Fields* and *The Alexandria Quartet*, and Martin Amis's authorial intrusion in *Money*. Multiple embedded narratives are used in both *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Golden Notebook* in order to question the need to distinguish between different orders of fiction. A palimpsestic narrative – where each volume retells or rewrites the earlier account – in the *Quartet* mirrors Darley's multiple truths, whilst the self-begetting narrative of *Under the Net* narrates the story its own conception. In all of these novels the presence of a novelist-character is vital to how the narrative unfolds, as well as to the structure of the novel. The novelist-characters looked at in this chapter all interact with the central themes – particularly those of authorial power and the depiction of truth – of the novels in which they appear. These themes are enhanced by the layering of narrative strands especially in *London Fields, The Alexandria Quartet, At Swim-Two-Birds,* and *The Golden Notebook*; devices such as unreliable narrators and authorial intrusion, which problematise the notion of 'truth' within the narrative; and self-begetting narratives which question the origin of the text.

With the exception of the 'Martin Amis' character in *Money*, all the novelist-characters studied in this chapter are also first person narrators.[656] By having the novelist-character also act as the frame narrator there is an opportunity for the author to subvert that narrative – as with the unreliable narrators Sam and Darley – so that the reader is not permitted to see, but must attempt to deduce, the truth of the events of the novel. In other words they must look outside of the frame narrative for truth. The first-person narrator, whether professedly unreliable or otherwise, presents a more flawed and fallible view-point which correlates with similar features seen depicted in the novelist-character – unlike a more omniscient third person narrator the first person narrator's knowledge is limited and subject to distortion, depending on the nature of the character. Even a character such as Jake, who is not unreliable to the same extent that Sam is, nonetheless displays a degree of fallaciousness – 'I knew everything. I got it all the wrong way round, that's all!'[657] He is forced to accept that his ideals have been misguided and to start again from the beginning: the circularity of his narrative demonstrates that he has learnt to accept the unknown. As with Jake's self-begotten narrative, several of the narratives appear to be written, or partially written by the novelist-character, which challenges the position of both author and character by distorting the origin of the text. *London Fields*, *The Alexandria Quartet*, *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Golden Notebook* also feature additional writer characters, which calls into question the authority of the central novel-character and the dominance that any one text or narrative strand holds over the others. This highlights the intertextual nature of literature as it expresses the plurivocal nature of the narrative, and the layering of texts and intertexts.

[656] Over half of the novelist-characters discussed throughout this thesis are also the first person narrator of the novel in which they appear, although Michael Owen and Anna Wulf feature as both first-person narrators and characters within alternate sections of the *What A Carve Up!* and *The Golden Notebook*. Not counting Anna and Michael, of the case studies that form Chapters 3-5 there are twice as many novelist-characters who also act as first-person narrators. The characters who are *not* also narrators are Quarles, Pinfold, Caroline, Margaret, 'Martin Amis' and Nastler.

[657] *Under the Net*, p.256.

The first person novelist-narrator acts to frame the narrative by accentuating the sense of storytelling within writing. This is particularly evident in *The Razor's Edge*, in which the Maugham character is much more peripheral than the other novelist-narrators – he observes and records events but is not the main focus of the narrative and is rarely involved in the action of the text. The novelist-narrator of *The Razor's Edge* purports to be telling a 'true' story about people he is acquainted with: he tells us 'I only want to set down what I know.'[658] The precedence which Mr. Maugham (and other novelist-narrators, especially Darley) appear to give truth over fiction sends up the notion that the primary function of the novel is uncover represent truth. If the story we are being told is fiction masquerading as truth this makes a mockery of the concept of truth: the pretend truths are in fact no more truthful than out-and-out fiction. This questioning of the conception that truth is superior to fiction also relates to the juxtaposition of different literary forms and styles in *At Swim-Two-Birds* and, to a lesser extent, *The Golden Notebook* both of which convey the equal value and fictionality of all fictional genres, rather than giving credence to realism over other styles of fiction.

[658] *The Razor's Edge*, p.1.

CHAPTER V: THE ROLE-PLAYING NOVEL-IST-CHARACTER

I. INTRODUCTION

> 'Mortimer's read your book, you see…so in a way, Michael, you *are* responsible for all of this. You should feel very proud of yourself.'
>
> She went back to her knitting, while Michael brooded over the role he could now be seen to have played in this bizarre story. He felt anything but proud.[659]

The final chapter of this thesis turns to depictions of the novelist-character in which the character is positioned as a metaphorical enactment of the novelist's function or position within society. Through this character the author is able to explore some of the alternative aspects of the novelist's role or position. In *The Writer's Roles* (1985), Elizabeth Penfield and Nancy Wicker discuss the versatility of the writer who, 'like an accomplished actor, can choose from a repertoire of roles and adopt each with ease.'[660] It is not just that the novelist can perform many functions, but that the process of novel-writing necessitates that they do, often unconsciously like Coe's Michael Owen. Michael remains unaware of the role he has been forced to play in the narrative of *What A Carve Up!* until it becomes too late for him to extract himself from this position; he has been manipulated by the circumstances of his birth, vocation, and his vanity as a novelist, as well as by the designs of Tabitha Winshaw who commissions him to write the history of her family. Michael not only inhabits the stereotypical role of the artist as outsider or recluse, he is also conditioned by his past to play the role of the dreamer;

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[659] *What A Carve Up!* p.478.

[660] Elizabeth Penfield and Nancy Wicker, *The Writer's Roles: Readings With Rhetoric* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1985), p.1.

his prophetic dreams are fulfilled as he adheres to his fate, in the novel's literal enactment of Barthes's 'Death of the Author.' Through Michael, Coe examines the agency of the novelist-character, forcing the reader to question how much authority the novelist actually holds over the text: this is a theme taken up by several of the writers within this chapter, especially Graham Greene, Anthony Burgess, and Alasdair Gray.

The first half of this chapter suggests examples of such metaphorical role-play in three case studies – the novelist as detective in Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1951); the novelist as everyman in William Boyd's *Any Human Heart* (2002); and the novelist as observer in Dodie Smith's *I Capture The Castle* (1949). The characterisation of the novelist figure in any of these guises reveals something of the process of creation, as in order to write fiction the novelist must perform acts of detection and observation in his chosen theme. Returning to Auden's conceit that the novelist must 'become the whole of boredom,'[661] *Any Human Heart* figures the novelist as an everyman or nobody, in its panorama of twentieth-century life through the diary of a failed novelist, as Logan Mountstuart observes and at times detects (and even spies) his way through a so-called ordinary life. Like Logan, *I Capture The Castle*'s Cassandra Mortmain uses her journal to filter the way she perceives reality. Her journal enables her to fulfil her dream, becoming what she imagines it is to be a writer, a dream she shares with the young Mountstuart whose career as a novelist proves short-lived, although his journal writing ensures not only that he keeps on living, often in spite of himself, but also provides a fitting tribute to that life. The novelist figures discussed in this chapter all define themselves, even the young Cassandra, through their writing, using it to discover truths about the world and different facets of their own identities, which enables them to assume various alternative roles that come to stand for their creative enterprises. Greene's Maurice Bendrix sets out to discover the truth about what happened to his ex-lover Sarah, playing the role of

[661] Auden, 'The Novelist,' line 10.

detective which acts to change the relationship he, as a novelist, has with his text. As a detective he becomes a reader of someone else's clues rather than author; his ultimate discovery throws his position as a novelist into uncertainty as he sets himself against God, who may be seen as the master-novelist. These three sections look at archetypal functions that all novelists perform in order to write, with each novelist-character embodying one of the roles a novelist may be seen to perform.

The second half of the chapter turns to more abstract notions of authorship and the author's role. Through the character of Margaret Matthews in *No Laughing Matter* (1967), Angus Wilson looks into the relationship between the novelist's work and their private life, especially the detrimental effect of the former on the latter. Margaret's early fiction is a setting-down of the many faults she sees within her family, especially in her parents: she uses her writing as a way of exorcizing difficult emotional responses to family-life, and also as a means of distancing herself from them. Ultimately she encounters problems in later life as she realises that, because of this, she has been unable to live a full life – she turns everything into fiction and forgets to live – contrary to the original purpose of her fiction, as enabling her to contend with her family life. She becomes so adept at using life to create her fiction that she forgets to live herself, similar to Michael who shuts himself off from society, into a world created by his own fatalistic dreams and fantasies. Like Cassandra, Margaret is also shown in opposition to her father's literary career, although whereas James Mortmain did have one exceptionally successful novel, Billy Matthews merely poses as a writer. Kenneth Toomey, in Burgess's *Earthly Powers* (1980), also finds himself acting the part of an infamous novelist, using his career (as well as his sexuality) as an excuse to distance himself from the idea of faith. *Earthly Powers* is examined alongside Gray's *Lanark* (1981), as both novels pit the authorial figure against religious themes, leading to an examination of authorial vs. divine power. *Earthly Powers* sets the author character against the Catholic Church, in the figure of the novelist's

brother-in-law, using Toomey's homosexuality as well as his profession to distance him from the church. Lanark meets his creator, the authorial figure Nastler, who proves his weakness and fallibility through his lack of control over the narrative. Such depictions of the novelist as a weak and flawed character disassociate the character-type from the traditional concept of the author-god, or the all-knowing puppet master.

II. 'WISE DETECTIVES'?

Writing, Reading, and Exploration in Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair*

> A detective must find it as important as a novelist to amass his trivial material before picking out the right clue. But how difficult that picking out is – the release of the real subject. The enormous pressure of the outside world weighs on us like a *peine forte et dure*. Now that I come to write my own story the problem is still the same, but worse – there are so many more facts, now that I have not to invent them.[662]

Whereas the novelist-narrator of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* does not believe in just 'one beginning and one ending for a book,'[663] Greene's Maurice Bendrix holds that 'a story has no beginning or end.'[664] Bendrix does not owe this belief to an idealised sense of the structure of the novel and how it may imitate life; instead he grudgingly cedes the choice of where and how to begin his story to the master-narrator, to the 'hand, plucking at my elbow,'[665] to divine interference. The opening of *The End of the Affair* juxtaposes Bendrix's powers as a novelist, something he refers to as 'the inaccurate pride of a professional writer'[666] with the difficult admission that he has not been in control of his fate, or even of this narrative. Crucially, in referring to God's hand in the matter, he tells us 'if I had believed then in a God'[667] allowing the 'then' to betray his reluctant conversion. This jeopardises the author-

[662] Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair* (London: Vintage, 2004), p.17.
[663] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.9.
[664] *The End of the Affair*, p.1.
[665] Ibid.
[666] Ibid.
[667] Ibid.

ity of the Bendrix character by positing God as the master novelist, a further implication of which is Bendrix's role as detective in the novel. Arguably, through equation with a detective figure, Bendrix is reduced to solving the puzzles set down by a more authoritative and powerful novelist, he thus loses autonomy over his own narrative by admitting to its predeterminism. He is, therefore, very much more like a reader of detective fiction, in that he processes the clues the private detective Parkis provides him with in order to solve the mystery of the narrative. This is evinced by the multiplicity of additional texts within the narrative, besides Bendrix's own accounts; as Robert Murray Davis notes, 'Bendrix becomes, instead of creator or even reporter, a reader of other's texts: of detective Parkis's reports; of a fragmentary letter…of Sarah's diary; of a letter by her received after her death; of a letter from Parkis; of marginalia in Sarah's childhood books.'[668]

The significance of Bendrix's profession as a novelist is integral to the plot of the novel. *The End of the Affair* was Greene's thirteenth novel; it was the first time he had employed a first-person narrator and his only one to feature a novelist-protagonist. Much criticism of the novel takes into account its autobiographical nature and its relation to Greene's own affair with Catherine Walston, the 'C' to whom the novel is dedicated. Peter Mudford insists that the novel 'would not have been written'[669] if it had not been for this relationship, whilst John Atkins suggests that it was 'the product of personal crisis, and the hatred had to be spilled out before Greene could recover his balance.'[670] There are also noted similarities between Greene and Bendrix,[671] especially in regard to writing habits. Bendrix's extremely regular working habits – 'five hundred words a day for five days a week. I can produce a novel in a

[668] Robert Murray Davis, 'The Struggle With Genre in *The End of the Affair*,' *Genre*, Vol. XVIII, No.4 (Winter, 1985), p.400.
[669] Peter Mudford, *Graham Greene* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1996), p.25.
[670] John Atkins, *Graham Greene* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1966), p.194.
[671] See, for example, Neil Sinyard, *Graham Greene: A Literary Life* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), R. H, Miller, *Understanding Graham Greene* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990).

year…when I was young not even a love affair would alter my schedule'[672] – are usually cited by critics as confirmation of the fact that he has been 'too finished and slick. He has had methodical control over his works, apparently to the extent that they had no life of their own.'[673] Bendrix, though productive and reasonably successful, cannot write with passion, as he tells us, 'If I could I would write with love, but if I could write with love, I would be another man,'[674] although within her diary Sarah reveals 'Maurice's pain goes into his writing.'[675] However it is evident that this novel, the novel we are reading, is different. For one thing it takes three years to write: although we are never actually told that the novel is written in 1949, it is possible to work out the date from what Bendrix does tell and show us: the main action of the novel – in which Bendrix tries to fathom Sarah's motivation – occurs in 1946[676] and at the beginning of the novel Bendrix tells us 'I have a vague memory now, after three years have passed.'[677] At this point, still tormented by memories of Sarah, he reflects on his previous writing 'I hate the books I write with their trivial unimportant skill, I hate the craftsman's mind in me so greedy for copy.'[678]

Thus Bendrix demonstrates how, through writing this novel, he has come to realise his previously misconceived notions about his work (amongst other things); even at the beginning of this novel he tells us 'this is a record of hate,' a statement he has come to retract by the novel's conclusion. Through the writing process he has discovered much about himself, the nature of love and hate, and about God. Although Bendrix cannot come to love God, as Sarah did, he at least comes to believe in – his hatred of Him confirms his belief, giving rise to what

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[672] *The End of the Affair*, p.24.
[673] Georg M. A. Gaston, *The Pursuit of Salvation: A Critical Guide to the Novels of Graham Greene* (New York: Whitston Publishing Company, 1984), p.46.
[674] *The End of the Affair*, p.6.
[675] Ibid, p.95.
[676] We know this from Sarah's last diary entry, which is dated '12 February 1946,' p.99.
[677] *The End of the Affair*, p.12.
[678] Ibid, p.151.

David Lodge calls an 'exhausted defiance.'[679] This process of self-discovery is only made clear through the writing of the book, hence the importance of Bendrix's profession, linking the book's epigraph[680] to a statement later made by Greene in his 1961 *In Search of a Character: Two African Journals*, that 'the novel is an unknown man and I have to find him.'[681] Greene used the detective novel as a metaphor for the writing process and, as Brian Diemert writes, much of his work 'can be profitably read as investigation of reading, of writing, of the power of fictions.'[682] In *The End of the Affair* this affinity of writing and detection is exemplified in the scene where Bendrix meets Mr. Savage, director of the firm of private detectives. At the beginning of their meeting Savage asks Bendrix to 'tell me everything in your own words,'[683] as if inviting him to tell a story. As Bendrix, who feels incredibly uncomfortable throughout their interview, begins to explain his case he becomes 'aware with anger that Mr Savage really knew all about it before I began to speak.'[684] His inference is that Savage is familiar with cases such as he believes Bendrix's to be, although this assumed foreknowledge places Savage in a position of experienced writer (or reader) of the detective genre, one who is overly familiar with stereotypical detective plotlines and motifs. Frustrated, Bendrix tells Savage:

> 'There's really nothing to go on,' I explained.
>
> 'Ah, that's my job,' Mr Savage said. 'You just give me the mood, the atmosphere.'[685]

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[679] David Lodge, *The Novelist at the Crossroads: and other Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London and New York: Ark, 1986), p.109.
[680] "Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering in order that they may have existence" – Léon Bloy
[681] Graham Greene, *In Search of a Character: Two African Journals* (London: The Bodley Head, 1961), p.13.
[682] Brian Diemert, *Graham Greene's Thrillers and the 1930s* (Montreal and Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p.177.
[683] *The End of the Affair*, p.13.
[684] Ibid, p.14.
[685] Ibid.

Savage intimates his ability to fill in the blanks of Bendrix's story from the mood or atmosphere the novelist provides him with, very much in the same way a reader can conjure the particulars of a scene from a writer's basic description. Savage presses Bendrix for any small detail he can give, insisting 'you'd be surprised what a lot *is* relevant,'[686] emphasising the importance of clues, like pieces of a puzzle, within the detective novel. This assertion of Savage's also expounds what Bendrix has told us previously of his own working practices. Right at the beginning of the narrative he tells us that the reason he becomes acquainted with Sarah in the first place is because he is doing research for a novel. He is writing 'a story with a senior civil servant as the main character…I had the cold-blooded intention of picking the brain of a civil servant's wife…I had only taken Henry up for the purpose of copy.'[687] Thus Bendrix's method of researching his character was to infiltrate Henry's home and family, to glean information on him from Sarah in a way not all that dissimilar from his own detective, Parkis, when he begins to follow Sarah and bribes her maid to acquire her diary. Parkis himself expresses a sentiment about his work – 'in my profession we are trained to put things in order and explain first things first'[688] – that aligns his profession to that of the novelist, through the shared propensity to provide shape and illumination to the reader/client.

The detective's search for truth also correlates with that of the novelist; as many of the preceding sections of this thesis have shown, the novelist-character is often used to interrogate the nature of truth and how (or if) it can be represented in the novel. The obsessive need to know the truth about Sarah drives Bendrix to near self-destruction. His mania for the truth has led Herbert R. Haber, amongst others, to propose that 'Bendrix seems then to embody the supposition that the novelist is least of all fit to comment with any accuracy or ultimate validi-

[686] Ibid, p.15.
[687] Ibid, p.4.
[688] Ibid, p.148.

ty in the truth of man's life or destiny.'[689] The question Bendrix asks himself, as does the reader, about whether he would have been better off not discovering the truth, facilitates the novel's investigation of religious faith and belief. Bendrix's authority as a novelist is called into question and, as he has defined himself through his profession, so is his sense of identity. This sense of dependence is alluded to early on in his relationship with Sarah, when he takes her to see the film version of one of his novels:

> The film was not a good film, and at moments it was acutely painful to see situations that had been so real to me twisted into the stock clichés of the screen.[690]

Towards the end of the novel he makes a similar point about authorial control, one that this time makes him associate his novelistic creation directly with divine creation:

> Always I find when I begin to write there is one character who obstinately will not come alive. There is nothing psychologically false about him, but he sticks, he has to be pushed around, words have to be found for him, all the technical skill I have acquired through the laborious years has to be employed in making him appear alive to my readers… and yet one cannot do without him. I can imagine God feeling in just that way about some of us… we have to be pushed around. We have the obstinacy of nonexistence. We are inextricably bound to the plot, and wearily God forces us, here and there, according to his intention.[691]

Bendrix's attempt to empathise with God – one creator to another – not only demonstrates his resigned belief in Him, it also forces him to recognise his own inferiority as author. Bendrix

[689] Herbert R. Haber, 'The End of the Catholic Cycle: The Writer Versus The Saint,' in ed., Robert O. Evans, *Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), p.145.
[690] *The End of the Affair*, p.32.
[691] Ibid, p.154.

also demonstrates his lack of free will when he states: 'if I were writing a novel I would end it here,'[692] almost forty pages before the actual ending of the narrative. This illustrates Bendrix's lack of control over the progression of the novel, it is out of his hands when to end it, as Ronald Walker posits, 'it is written through him but not by him.'[693] However, Michael Sheldon (for one) maintains that Bendrix still exerts a degree of control over the narrative and that he uses the narrative to re-take some of that control. Sheldon writes that Bendrix 'cannot undo what God has done to Sarah in real life, but he can tell the story his way. He can say whatever he wants and can even cast God as the villain.'[694] The novel's conclusion sees Bendrix defying God through his hatred of him:

> You've taken her, but You haven't got me yet…You're a devil, God, tempting us to leap. But I don't want Your peace and I don't want Your love.[695]

He retains Sarah's diary in order to keep hold of a part of her but also takes ownership of her through the fictional counterpart he creates; 'within the fixed boundaries of his narrative, she will always be his woman…a prisoner of his imagination.'[696] Sheldon concludes that this reflected something of Greene's own attitude towards his affair with Catherine Walston, giving him 'a chance to possess a part'[697] of her. The end of the novel sees Bendrix's final plea to God – 'You've robbed me of enough…leave me alone for ever'[698] – leaving the reader with a final impression of God as wrong-doer, or at least as Bendrix's rejection of and final separation from Him even despite his reluctant belief. Does this mean that Bendrix has won the narrative from God, succeeding in his portrayal of Him as malevolent? He has, at least, been able to tell his own story, one which, contrary to his understanding of himself as a writer, has been

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[692] Ibid, p.121.
[693] Ronald G. Walker, 'World Without End: An Approach to Narrative Structure in Greene's *The End of the Affair*,' *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer, 1984), p.237.
[694] Michael Sheldon, *Graham Greene: The Man Within* (London: Minerva, 1995), p.376.
[695] *The End of the Affair*, p.159.
[696] Sheldon, *Graham Greene*, p.379.
[697] Ibid, p.380.
[698] *The End of the Affair*, p.160.

written with love. As Bendrix predicted[699] he has become a different man through the dual processes of writing and discovery.

[699] Ibid, p.6.

III. 'THERE WERE NO OBITUARIES'

The Novelist as Everyman and Nobody in William Boyd's *Any Human Heart*

> We keep a journal to entrap that collection of selves that forms us, the individual human being…a true journal presents us with the more riotous and disorganized reality. The various stages of development are there, but they are jumbled up, counterposed and repeated randomly. The selves jostle for prominence in these pages…I am all these different people and all these different people are me.
>
> Every life is both ordinary and extraordinary.[700]

Like Greene's novelist-narrator Bendrix, Logan Mountstuart, the novelist and diarist in William Boyd's *Any Human Heart,* appears to be guided by a higher, controlling power. This power is not (as in Greene's novel) God, but a less overt authority: simply, the 'inescapable randomness'[701] of human life. Some might call it fate, or even destiny, but such words imply a sense of order and of trajectory which is at odds with Boyd's intentions: writing in *The Guardian*, four years after the publication of *Any Human Heart*, he explains his choice of the journal form for the novel: the journal or diary 'is the opposite of a shapely narrative, written, as it is, moment to moment. The future is a void: we don't know if this decision we have taken will be life-changing.'[702] The journals, which intermittently record Logan's life from 1923, when he is seventeen, until his death in 1991, have been edited, annotated and presented to the

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[700] William Boyd, *Any Human Heart* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2002), p.7.
[701] Nicholas Blincoe, 'History as Farce,' *The NewStatesman*, 1st April (2002), accessed 09/10/13 http://www.newstatesman.com/node/142656
[702] William Boyd, 'Nice One, Cyril,' *The Guardian*, 4th November (2006), accessed 09/10/13 http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/nov/04/featuresreviews.guardianreview3

reader by an unknown hand, that may or may not be that of William Boyd. Boyd is never mentioned within the novel, only appearing as a name on the book jacket. Boyd's previous work, the hoax biography *Nat Tate: An American Artist, 1928-1960* (1998) first introduces Logan as a friend and confidant of Nat Tate; it is only here that Boyd states he is editing the journals,[703] although, in his acknowledgements he thanks one Gudrun Ingridsdottir as 'administrator of the Estate of Logan Mountstuart.'[704] This name does not appear again within Logan's diaries or even in the index to the work. In the earlier work Boyd refers to Logan as:

> A curious and forgotten figure in the annals of twentieth century literary life. 'A man of letters' is probably the only description which does justice to his strange career – by turns acclaimed or wholly indigent. Biographer, belle-lettriste, editor, failed novelist, he was perhaps most successful at happening to be in the right place at the right time during most of the century, and his journal – a huge, copious document – will probably prove his lasting memorial.[705]

This summation thus negates the final statement made in *Any Human Heart*: 'there were no obituaries,'[706] for even though Logan's star had long since waned, his journals provide the reader with a fitting tribute to his life. The 2010 television adaptation of *Any Human Heart* reinforces this sentiment in its final shot – a close-up on a bookshop table display of Logan's opus, *Any Human Heart: The Intimate Journals of Logan Mountstuart*; Boyd's name does not appear on these mocked-up copies of the journals.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of *Any Human Heart* is the interplay between the real, historical events and characters, and those events and characters that are fictional. Logan's

[703] William Boyd, *Nat Tate: An American Artist, 1928-1960* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p.11.
[704] Ibid, p.5.
[705] Ibid, p.11.
[706] *Any Human Heart*, p.490.

meetings and interactions with various well-known historical figures[707] place him, as a fictitious character, within the context of the real-world: thus suggesting the very fine line between fiction and reality. He conceivably *could* have existed and fallen into obscurity whilst those he knew – Waugh, Powell, Yorke, Hemingway, Fleming – went on to notoriety. Arguably, by positioning Logan within actual historical events and amongst 'real' historical figures, Boyd is commentating upon the nature of artistic celebrity and the status of obscure writers and artists; those who rubbed shoulders with fame and recognition but now seem never to have existed. This is exemplified by the scene in which Wallis Simpson askes Logan to sign their visitors' book – 'I picked up the pen, pretended to write my name, but she had drifted away.'[708] That he declines to do as requested by Wallis,[709] and so does not leave a signature as evidence of his presence, creates the possibility that he *could* have been there, he just chose not to leave any proof or trace of his attendance. In his article 'Nice One, Cyril' Boyd cites Cyril Connolly and William Gerhardie as influences for the character of Logan. Gerhardie in particular he refers to as someone who had had 'a huge influence on Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, and Anthony Powell… I began to toy with the idea of writing a novel about such a writer: a minor talent but one who, through the rackety, roller-coaster life he led, would be somehow exemplary of the human condition.'[710]

Boyd seems at pains to illustrate the ordinariness of Logan as both a writer and a human being, which the diary form accentuates as it allows him no foresight, no intuition about the future; it simply records historical events and how they impacted upon Logan, offering no evaluation of the historical moment itself. Despite the upper-middle class upbringing of his family, school-life, Oxford education, and early years as a writer of some renown, Richard

[707] Including The Duke of Windsor and Wallis Simpson, Ian Fleming, Evelyn Waugh, Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway, Anthony Powell and Henry Yorke, members of the Baader-Meinhof gang, Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Frank O'Hara.
[708] Ibid, p.221.
[709] He is asked not to sign by David Eccles, p.220.
[710] Boyd, 'Nice One, Cyril,' accessed 09/10/13.

Eder writes that 'ultimately Logan is a stoic Everyman, his inborn snobberies weathered away through years of misadventuring and misapprehending.'[711] Also writing in *The New York Times*, Michiko Kakutani describes Logan as 'an average fellow…[who] stays firmly on the sidelines,'[712] which has caused David Christie to associate Logan with another literary character who chronicles the twentieth-century from the sidelines – Anthony Powell's narrator Nicholas Jenkins from *A Dance to The Music of Time*. Christie disparages Logan as a character in comparison with Jenkins (admittedly he is writing in *The Anthony Powell Society Newsletter*, thus facilitating a degree of bias), pointing to Logan's self-interest as opposed to Jenkins, whom Christie finds was 'very interested in other people who, in turn, seemed to like him…Logan Mountstuart ended his rather empty life sans partner, friends, or even country, whereas Nick, in *Hearing Secret Harmonies*, is firmly embedded in his society as a respected and productive member.'[713] As discussed in the section on Jenkins as novelist-narrator, Powell designated this role specifically to observe the world through his network of friends and associates; he is a novelist-narrator of a vast novel cycle whereas what we see of Logan is all relayed through his more limited personal journals: the different forms necessitate alternative handling of narrative viewpoint in relation to additional characters and the events depicted in the novels. Although the diary form is almost necessarily solipsistic, Logan does demonstrate a measure of feeling for his fellow man, reinforcing his status as Everyman. For example, in 1938, writing about the impending war, he reflects that:

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[711] Richard Eder, 'Evelyn Waugh Kissed Me,' *The New York Times*, February 16th (2003), accessed 09/10/2013 http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/16/books/evelyn-waugh-kissed-me.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm

[712] Michiko Kakutani, 'Books of the Times; A Witness to a Century, Just Looking Out for Himself,' *The New York Times*, 14th February (2003), accessed 09/10/13 http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/14/books/books-of-the-times-a-witness-to-a-century-just-looking-out-for-himself.html

[713] David Christie, 'Any Human Heart,' *The Anthony Powell Society Newsletter*, Issue 12 (Autumn, 2003), p.4.

> I'm sure my German equivalent – the writer in his thirties, with a wife and child on the way – can't feel any different from me, can't want to see his cities bombed, his continent ravaged by war.[714]

Throughout the novel Logan's moderate success as a novelist is matched against that of his oldest friend, Peter Scabius, in whom Boyd sets up a foil to Logan by making Scabius a fellow writer, but of a very different type. Logan's literary pretensions are evident from his early diaries but he is surprised to find that his friend also harbours similar ambitions. Although he has already declared his intentions to write, stating unapologetically at his Oxford interview – 'the only reason I want to come to this depressing place is that it will give me time to write'[715] – he subsequently plays down this dream to Scabius:

> I said I'd probably end up a schoolteacher and asked Peter what he dreamed of becoming. 'A famous novelist,' he said. 'Like Michael Arlen or Arnold Bennett with his yacht.' This took me back somewhat. Peter a writer? The mind does boggle.[716]

Significantly Scabius prefaces his interest in being a novelist with the word 'famous' which intimates his true desire of celebrity and money, rather than artistic expression. Logan's own success as a novelist in the early thirties is largely concluded before Scabius has even begun his literary career; he makes an inauspicious start as a writer, 'working as a sub-editor on the *Reading Evening News*'[717] in 1929. However, by 1935 he has written his first novel:

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[714] *Any Human Heart*, p.203.
[715] Ibid, p.33.
[716] Ibid, p.53.
[717] Ibid, p.121.

Thursday, 26 September

> At lunch today Peter [Scabius] presented me with a copy of his thriller – or his 'Teccie', as he referred to it with disparaging modesty. It's called *Beware of the Dog*, published by Brown and Almay next week. Just a bit of fun really, he said, not in your league.[718]

The novel sells 'almost 10,000 copies'[719] by the following March, and by 1939 Scabius has written a further two, upon which Logan comments, 'he is, by all surprising accounts, a far more successful writer than I am. I'm glad to say I do not possess a scintilla of envy for him.'[720] This remark is almost certainly genuine as it is written shortly after one of the happiest moments of his own life, the birth of his daughter. Logan is also fully aware of Scabius's own unhappy marriage in comparison to his own, 'I'm so happy…that I think I might explode.'[721] Scabius goes on to have a string of failed marriages and of bestselling novels, eventually being knighted for services to literature in 1977. At this point Logan, who has been living alone and in almost abject poverty, expresses:

> To be candid, I felt a pang of envy before indifference and reality closed in again. It was not so much envy, in fact (I've never envied Peter's success – he's too much of a fraud and an egomaniac to provoke real envy), it was more an impromptu insight into my condition vis-à-vis his.[722]

Logan has, throughout his life, been realistic enough about his own literary abilities in comparison to Scabius's to feel jealous of his career. Despite the array of famous historical authors Logan meets, he maintains a closer friendship to the correspondingly fictional Scabius

[718] Ibid, p.173.
[719] Ibid, p.177.
[720] Ibid, p.204.
[721] Ibid, p.199.
[722] Ibid, p.430.

throughout his life. Boyd thus engages with the double – as discussed in relation to *New Grub Street*, *The Black Prince*, and *The Information* – depicted within friendships between successful and unsuccessful novelists. Despite Scabius's success and the 'newspapers…full of long obituaries and respectful assessments'[723] upon his death, he is in fact ostensibly no more successful than Logan in comparison to the cast of real-life authors who make cameos in the novel: both Logan and Scabius's failures or successes are thrown into relief by their shared fictionality when viewed alongside the actual authors with whom they share the novel. Christopher Tayler, in his review of *Any Human Heart*, comments on Logan's mediocrity:

> Mountstuart's flimsiness as a novelistic character is supposed to make the book more realistic by acknowledging that personality is nebulous in itself. In practice, though, it has the opposite effect. His inconsistencies are a matter of convenience – an excuse for him to meet Hemingway, Joyce, Woolf and all the rest – and for too much of the time, Mountstuart is revealed for what he is: a device allowing Boyd to write about 20th-century celebrities in the pastiche idiom of a contemporary observer.[724]

Whilst these assertions may be true to an extent, I would argue that Boyd does much more with the character than Tayler gives him credit for. As an insubstantial novelist-character Logan is certainly used as a device, but one who performs multiple functions: he allows Boyd to comment upon the fleeting nature of literary fame as well as demonstrating the innate ordinariness of literary lives, often elsewhere seen to be a great deal more extraordinary. It also enables him to reflect upon how the significance of personal everyday events, as well as the historically significant ones, impact upon the psyche of a writer; addressing issues of artistic expression in both the private and public sides of the author. The lack of engagement with his

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[723] Ibid, p.459.
[724] Christopher Tayler, 'A Bit of a Lush,' *London Review of Books*, Vol. 24, No. 10 (23rd May, 2003), p.21.

society that Christie observed in his comparison of Jenkins and Logan is justified by a statement made by Logan at the opening of his sixth journal, the African Journal. He begins:

> **1969**
>
> *Sunday, 20 July*
>
> David Gascoyne once told me that the only point of keeping a journal was to concentrate on the personal, the diurnal minutiae, and forget the great and significant events in the world at large. The newspapers cover all that anyway, he said. We don't want to know that 'Hitler invaded Poland' – we're more curious about what you had for breakfast.[725]

Despite Logan's decay in regard to his fame, fortune, hopes for the future, and perhaps even what literary talent he once had, he determines to keep on writing. Following his discovery of the deaths of his wife and daughter his cousin tells him 'you're a writer, for God's sake…you've got to keep on writing'[726] – illustrating an awareness of the importance, for the writer, to go on being able to define oneself through work. Significantly, after a period of mental instability following a suicide attempt, Logan resumes his journal (after a gap of over two years) with the declaration: 'so here I am in New York, writing again, working again, fucking again, living again'[727] – placing writing first and foremost amongst his other activities. That he persists in writing until the day of his death underlines the importance of writing to him, his journal is perhaps the one thing that has kept him going through the traumas of his life. In his penultimate and most dispirited journal, the Second London Journal, he acknowledges part of his purpose in continuing with the diary:

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[725] *Any Human Heart*, p.376.
[726] Ibid, p.281.
[727] Ibid, p.302.

> I fear it will become a documentation of one writer's decline…these final acts in a writer's life usually go unrecorded because the reality is too shaming, too sad, too banal.[728]

Although Logan has many years of life still before him at the point of writing, and his situation does improve, this self-analysis tallies with Boyd's intention to represent the very ordinary life of a writer: the above affirmation may well be seen to stand for the function and purpose of the novel as a whole.

[728] Ibid, p.398.

IV. 'I WRITE THIS SITTING IN THE KITCHEN SINK'

The Novelist as Observer in Dodie Smith's *I Capture The Castle*

> I don't really want to write any more, I just want to lie here and think. But there is something I want to capture. It has to do with the feeling…the queer separate feeling. I like seeing people when they can't see me. I have often looked at our family through lighted windows and they seem quite different, a bit the way rooms seen in looking-glasses do. I can't get the feeling into words – it slipped away when I tried to capture it.[729]

Cassandra Mortmain, the writer-narrator of Dodie Smith's *I Capture The Castle*, sets out to capture the everyday reality of her home-life from within, by literally writing from the kitchen sink: if the kitchen is the heart of home-life then the kitchen sink represents all that is most practical and unsentimental about it. Cassandra's admissions about her chosen workplace – 'I can't say that I am really comfortable, and there is a depressing smell of carbolic soap'[730] – reinforce the harshness of her threadbare existence and the reality she attempts to portray within her notebooks. She writes from the sink because 'this is the only part of the kitchen where there is any daylight left'[731] indicating the intention of her notebooks – to provide illumination and understanding of her chaotic life – but also because she has 'found that sitting in a place where you have never sat before can be inspiring.'[732] This speaks to her willingness as a writer to put herself in unusual positions, to see the world from unlikely perspectives in or-

[729] Dodie Smith, *I Capture The Castle* (London: Red Fox, 2001), pp.78.
[730] Ibid, p.7.
[731] Ibid.
[732] Ibid.

der to achieve a better understanding of her subject. Her flexibility and position at the heart of the family place her writing style in opposition that of her novelist father, James Mortmain:

> Years and years ago, he wrote a very unusual book called *Jacob Wrestling*, a mixture of fiction, philosophy and poetry…once we were settled here he was supposed to begin a new book. But time went on without anything happening and at last we realized that he had given up even trying to write – for years now, he has refused to discuss the possibility. Most of his life is spent in the gatehouse room, which is icy cold in winter as there is no fireplace; he just huddles over an oil-stove. As far as we know he does nothing but read detective novels from the village library.[733]

Unlike Cassandra, Mortmain removes himself from his family and home-life, spending all his time alone in the gatehouse. His writer's block is not conditioned by his solitude as, towards the end of the novel, Cassandra and her brother Thomas imprison him in part of the ruined castle (intending to recreate his experience in prison and so release him from this creative block) to try and force him to write again, and the experiment is successful. However it is the involvement and intervention of his children which finally spur him on, something he had not sought out during his years of inactivity. Victoria Stewart observes the differing approaches of father and daughter to writing, stating that Cassandra's success in writing is down to her remaining 'enmeshed in the life of the home, both the setting and the source for her writing.'[734] Writing from the kitchen sink, Cassandra literally (perhaps unknowingly) participates in the domesticity of women's writing from experience, what Beebe terms the sacred fount; her father's self-enforced isolation places him within the oppositional ivory tower of the traditionally masculine tormented artist. His status within the family is upheld by make-believe – what

[733] Ibid, pp.8-10.
[734] Victoria Stewart, 'Realism, Modernism and the Representation of Memory in Dodie Smith's *I Capture The Castle*,' *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Fall, 2008), p.331.

Cassandra terms 'the fiction that he is still a famous writer.'[735] The near-mythical position he inhabits, both for the family and to the reader, is simultaneously enhanced and undermined by his own admission and the equation of his non-existent work with fable; when Cassandra asks him how his writing is going he responds:

> You're too old to believe in fairy tales…it's time this legend that I'm a writer ceased.[736]

Mortmain's 'work' comes to be defined by its fictionality, and although Simon twice compares him to God[737] the comparison is used to excuse or explain away his eccentric behaviour. In contrast to this representation of her father's writing and working process, Cassandra's narrative, told as a journal or writer's notebook, a version of what constitutes source material. Firstly, she writes to gain the experience of writing – 'I am writing this journal partly to practice my newly acquired speed-writing and partly to teach myself how to write a novel'[738] – but, through her writing she is able to demonstrate the importance of everyday experience for a writer – 'I only want to write. And there's no college for that except life.'[739] It is Cassandra's role as an observer – of her home and family life; of society and the world around her; of the various traditions, customs and culture that define and impose social order – that both inspire her to write and enable her writing to effectively reflect what she sees and thus provide insight. Writing about her reality changes her perceptions, both of it and her place within it. In *The Writer's Roles* (1985), Elizabeth Penfield and Nancy Wicker discuss the writer's powers of observation in conjunction with the uses of the writer's diary, asking:

> How then does one develop the ability to bring order out of sensory and intellectual chaos? Keeping a journal, a diary, or a notebook is one way many writ-

[735] *I Capture The Castle*, p.20.
[736] Ibid, pp.52-53.
[737] Ibid, pp.74;402.
[738] Ibid, p.8.
[739] Ibid, p.406.

> ers collect details and explore their external and internal worlds…notebooks not only allow writers to record information for future use and to explore personal feelings and conflicts, but they also enable writers to practice the craft of writing.[740]

Cassandra's notebooks, in which she has taught herself how to write a novel, have become transformed into the finished novel, *I Capture The Castle*. Certainly, according to Smith's biographer Valerie Grove, Smith's 'original typescript read 'I Capture The Castle by Cassandra Mortmain''[741] (something her publisher refused to endorse), supporting the self-begetting nature of the novel. Smith's first attempt at autobiography[742] employed the style and voice of an adolescent girl's journal, although written when Smith was in her thirties, suggesting the ease with which she inhabited this character, as she did later with Cassandra, whom Grove states was, 'in most respects, pure Dodie.'[743] Smith's ability to channel different facets of herself is demonstrated through Cassandra's own reflection of her disparate selves; at one point she observes:

> All day I have been two people – the me imprisoned in yesterday and the me out here on the mound; and now there is a third me trying to get in – the me in what is going to happen next.[744]

Like both Darley and Logan, Cassandra's journal-keeping allows her to reflect on the co-existence within the diary, of past, present, and future selves, all of whom are different. She

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[740] Elizabeth Penfield and Nancy Wicker, *The Writer's Roles: Readings With Rhetoric* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1985), pp.14-5.
[741] Valerie Grove, *Dear Dodie: The Life of Dodie Smith* (London: Pimlico, 2002), p.178.
[742] Unpublished notebooks entitled 'An Eye to Posterity,' later revised into four volumes *Look Back with Love: a Manchester Childhood* (1974), *Look Back with Mixed Feelings* (1978), *Look Back with Astonishment* (1979) and *Look Back with Gratitude* (1985). See Grove, especially pp.17-18 and p.296.
[743] Grove, p.164.
[744] *I Capture The Castle*, p.166.

also recognises the differences between her writing self and the self who experiences life; for example she tells us:

> While I have been writing I have lived in the past, the light of it has been all around me – first the golden light of autumn, then the silver light of spring and then the strange light, grey but exciting, in which I see the historic past. But now I have come back to earth and rain is beating on the attic window, an icy draught is blowing up the staircase.[745]

Thus, she separates her thoughts and feelings into those which are pleasant and happy in writing and the past, and her realisation of reality in the cold and unforgiving elements. Although the matter of her journal is taken from her daily observations of those around her, her working of the source material becomes more real for her – at one point she writes 'it is most strange and wretched coming back to the present after being in this journal so long.'[746] For Cassandra the journal becomes her method of coping with reality; it filters both what she experiences and what she observes into a manageable form, one over which she maintains the control she cannot maintain over life. Often she prefers to write when she should act; when her sister Rose cries Cassandra recognises what she ought to do:

> As she only cries about once a year I really ought to have gone over and comforted her, but I wanted to set it all down here. I begin to see that writers are liable to become callous.[747]

In making such observations about herself her writing also observes some of the conventions of the confessional narrative – 'is it wrong of me…perhaps I ought even to feel guilty'[748] – containing secrets kept from her family. Stewart remarks that the speed-writing Cassandra

[745] Ibid, p.48.
[746] Ibid, p.306.
[747] Ibid,p.13.
[748] Ibid, p.239.

employs in her journal is like a code, meaning the fact that 'other protagonists are unable to read what Cassandra has written adds both to the sense of her being a spy or outsider within her own home and to the intimacy between the narrator and the reader, who is privy to the "decoded" text.'[749] It also preserves a strict privacy over her writing that cannot be infiltrated, leaving her free to confess her deepest secrets; this in turn causes the journal to become a tool for self-analysis – 'perhaps if I make myself write I shall find out what is wrong with me'[750] – and even of exorcism – 'I had better write it out of my system.'[751] Cassandra also uses her journal as a form of escapism from the bleak reality of her family life, admitting that writing it makes her feel better despite the trials of life:

> I think it worthy of note that I never felt happier in my life – despite sorrow for father, pity for Rose, embarrassment about Stephen's poetry and no justification for hope as regards our family's general outlook. Perhaps it is because I have satisfied my creative urge; or it may be due to the thought of eggs for tea.[752]

The admission at the end of this statement is characteristic of Cassandra's honest and slightly naïve sense of humour. She finds reality easy to depict, as opposed to writing fictions – 'with stories even a page can take me hours, but the truth seems to flow out as fast as I can get it down.'[753] These feelings are emphasised by a comparison of her writing materials at various points in her family's changing circumstances. Her journals are broken down into three notebooks: 'The Sixpenny Book,' 'The Shilling Book,' and 'The Two Guinea Book' – the last of which, along with a fountain pen, are a gift from Simon. Cassandra, although she romanticises

[749] Stewart, p.331.
[750] *I Capture The Castle*, p.225.
[751] Ibid, p.115.
[752] Ibid, p.17.
[753] Ibid, pp.33-34.

her improved circumstances, admits that she wrote more fluently when her writing implements were more humble:

> A scarlet pen and a blue and gold leather bound book – what could be more inspiring? But I seemed to get on better with a stump of pencil and Stephen's fat, shilling exercise book.[754]

This speaks to a nostalgia for the more simple past, one that was honest because Rose had not yet had to deceive herself and her family into believing that she genuinely loved Simon and did not only desire his fortune. Although Cassandra is not aware of this truth at the time she writes the above, her writer's intuition knows something is wrong and makes her writing more difficult.

> I go backwards and forwards, recapturing the past, wondering about the future – and, most unreasonably, I find myself longing for the past more than for the future…I count the blessings that have descended on us; but I still seem to fancy the past most.[755]

In her longing for the past, for what has already been written and recorded in her journal, she expresses a sadness that what she perceives as the climax of the action has already passed – Rose has won her fairytale future. Whilst she was still in pursuit of this goal, everyday life had become exciting as a novel: the sisters' only models for romance are in the novels of Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters.[756] Arguably Cassandra believes that the happy-ever-after of the novel has almost been reached and her nostalgic desire for the past is a desire for what she believes is the now dissipated action. It is also a reaction to a loss of her sister and the subsequent break-up of her day-to-day life, as well as an impending loss of childish preoccupations

[754] Ibid, p.225.
[755] Ibid.
[756] Ibid, p.32.

and even innocence, which cause her to dwell on the nostalgia of the past. By the end of the novel she recognises how much she has learnt and so changed, but equally how much she has still to experience. Following her discussion with Simon on her father's work and their good-bye, she concludes:

> I don't intend to go on with this journal; I have grown out of wanting to write about myself.[757]

Her growing maturity is highlighted by an understanding of her father's style of writing, something Stewart suggests acts both as conflict and dialogue with the realist nature of her own journals. Simon's explanation of what he terms her father's 'Enigmatism' proves to Cassandra the inadequacy of her journal form – 'can you always express just what you want to express…does everything go into nice tidy words?'[758] Simon stresses the importance of 'creation as discovery'[759] and expounds that 'art could state very little – that its whole business was to evoke responses.'[760] Cassandra's decision to end her journal and her story has been impacted by the realisation that it is no longer enough for her to represent reality – or that she now realises the impossibility of representing reality. Whilst she may not adhere to her father's Enigmatism, she now sees that, although 'I could never explain how the image and the reality merge, and how they somehow beautify each other,'[761] this process of expressing her feelings is the type of artistic creation she is compelled towards.

[757] Ibid, p.408.
[758] Ibid, p.404.
[759] Ibid, p.402.
[760] Ibid, p.404.
[761] Ibid.

V. 'NAILED ON PAPER'

The Role of the Novelist(s) in Family Life, in Angus Wilson's *No Laughing Matter*

> Margaret fixed accurately the little stream of frothy spittle that had run from the side of the Countess' mouth. Later she would make a phrase about it, connecting it perhaps with snakes and venom, and write the phrase down in her notebook. Yet with venomous spittle alone she would satisfy, she knew, only today's resentment.[762]

Like Cassandra in *I Capture The Castle*, Margaret Matthews, the central writer-character in Angus Wilson's *No Laughing Matter*, begins her writing career by narrativising her family life. However, unlike Cassandra, her compulsion to turn her day-to-day life into fiction comes from a deep-seated resentment of her family, specifically of her parents, whom she and her five siblings name The Countess – 'a genteelism of Cuntess, established for the benefit of the nursery' – and Billy Pop – 'billygoat of father, bleating and ruttish.'[763] Also resident at the family home are the children's paternal grandmother, Granny Matthews, and their mother's aunt, Miss Rickard (called Aunt Mouse), famed in the family for her 'wise dryness.'[764] The well-travelled and independent Aunt Mouse is a key figure for Margaret; in the earliest example of her writing, a diary entry based on the occasion of the family's visit to the Wild West exhibition in Kensington, Margaret internalises the criticism of her great aunt's voice:

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[762] Angus Wilson, *No Laughing Matter* (London: Penguin, 1969), p.52.
[763] Ibid, pp.132;40.
[764] Ibid, p.17.

> She read through the passage and her mouth seemed filled with sickening sugar and choking starch…she dreaded to think how Aunt Mouse would look. 'Maggie, my dear girl…where's your sense of humour? Life isn't all icing sugar, my dear.'[765]

In order to protect herself from this anticipated criticism, Margaret adds an entirely fictional event in which the family's dogs savage and kill a marmoset from the exhibition. Having intoned this passage Margaret regrets that it has spoilt her intention – 'to convey the incredible, sudden family happiness of today'[766] – and, in knowing defiance of her aunt's opinion, instead decides to remove herself, and therefore the autobiographical intention, from the diary by making it belong instead to a created character:

> She turned to the inside cover of her diary, A Pioneer in the Prairies, she wrote, Being the Journal of Lady Margaret Carmichael, A Lady of Quality. There, now it was someone else, and Aunt Mouse and all other mice could jeer as much as they wished, it would not touch her.[767]

Margaret begins to serially fictionalise her family's antics, under the guise of the Carmichael stories, which go on to make her name as a novelist. Until she can escape the family home she uses these stories to exorcize her anger and resentment towards her parents as well as allowing a sense of detachment from everyday life. The function of her writing reflects the processes of 'The Game' the six siblings play. This takes the form of an improvised play in which each of the siblings, except Quentin who portrays the judge Mr Justice Scales, impersonate one of the grown-ups of the house – their parents, grandmother, great aunt and their cook, whom they call Reagan. The Game, which, as Andrezej Gasiorek observes can be seen to stand 'as a met-

[765] Ibid, p.14.
[766] Ibid, pp.14-15.
[767] Ibid, p.15.

aphor for *No Laughing Matter* as a whole,'[768] is 'born of their need to relieve their pent up shame, distress and anger in histrionics, to heal their hurts with mimicry's homeopathic sting, and no doubt as well to indulge some sexual urges.'[769] Each of the children represents the adult for whom they have the most feeling, in terms of love or hate. So, for example, the youngest, Marcus, plays the mother who bullies him and whom he despises; Margaret (of course) plays Aunt Mouse whom she both respects and fears, 'sharing her sourness and willingness to tell hurtful truths.'[770] The Game's purpose, in giving the children release but also providing a means by which they can, for a while, maintain the control they lack over life; Margaret's Carmichael stories, whilst also fulfilling these functions, also act as a form of self-protection:

> Slowly, practisedly she relaxed by means of the familiar stringing together of words…then through the words came a sudden intense vision of her mother's bare shoulder…of being squeezed in her mother's arms…It was when she had fallen down on the rocks at Cromer and cut her forehead…her mother had responded at once, had whispered and kissed away her fright. Pity, if not love, nagged her. But she would never be able to reach them, never. At least she could bring them to life again in words that were more complete, more understanding, more just to her own comprehension of them than the flat self-protecting ironies of her Carmichael writing.[771]

This passage demonstrates the dual-purposes of Margaret's fictions. Most overtly, the Carmichael stories allow her to vent her frustrations at her ineffectual parents who are the main targets of her bitterest ironies, unlike The Game's portrayal of Aunt Mouse. However, behind the

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[768] Andrezej Gasiorek, 'Resisting Postmodernism: The Parodic Mode of Angus Wilson's *No Laughing Matter*,' *English Studies in Canada*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (March, 1993), p.55.
[769] *No Laughing Matter*, p.130
[770] Peter Conradi, *Angus Wilson* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997), p.40.
[771] *No Laughing Matter*, p.49.

ironic depictions of her family comes this image of the past, the incidental kindness of her mother: it is this memory that she wishes to preserve, by hiding it away under the satire of the family in her fictions. As Patrick Swinden notes, Margaret's 'reputation as a writer depends on the stories she has written about the Carmichael family, a family in all important respects like her own. But she writes about it in such a way as to direct attention away from what the real experience of living amongst them must have been like, towards a detached, unsympathetic scrutiny of their absurdities, their petty malices and jealousies.'[772] Margaret holds back on the sentimental side of her family life in accordance with her own internal critic, Aunt Mouse. Only much later in her career, when she has become established as a novelist, is Margaret able to ignore Aunt Mouse's instructions, and return to the other way of writing:

> Mouse…would have urged her to snap back at the world. This she would not do, comfortable, easy though it would be, delighted though the world was to be snapped at. Relying upon the other side…she would return as warmly as she could.[773]

Margaret's short story 'The Wedding (a Carmichael story)'[774] which is included within the text of *No Laughing Matter*, is a fictionalised account of her twin sister Sukey's wedding. Margaret and Sukey each represent very different life choices for women; whist Margaret becomes a successful author, Sukey revels in her motherhood and domesticity. In discussing Margaret's treatment of her wedding, Sukey remains ignorant of the novelist's intentions:

> The whole thing was complete nonsense. To begin with she made Hugh a curate. Hugh who always tried to cut school prayers when he can…I never have time for reading, so I don't know, but I can't believe they make things more

[772] Patrick Swinden, *The English Novel of History and Society, 1940-80: Richard Hughes, Henry Green, Anthony Powell, Angus Wilson, Kingsley Amis, V.S.Naipaul* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p.171.
[773] *No Laughing Matter*, p.232.
[774] Ibid, p.150.

> depressing than they really are, like Meg does. It's so pointless. There's a story of hers about a visit we all made as children to that Exhibition at Earl's Court. It was a completely perfect day…Oh, all sorts of delights! And glorious sunshine. Everything glittering…all Meg can find to say is, "And then it rained." That's how she ends the story – "And then it rained."[775]

V. P. Sharma notes that 'Sukey's naïve judgement on her sister's fiction raises many issues relating to the nature of the genre, indeed of all art. Is the novelist's obligation to the facts or reality? Or is his primary obligation to the pattern he imposes on external reality and to the needs of his vision?'[776] The inclusion of the novelist as a character in any novel enables the author to raise such questions pertaining to the novelist's role and of the relation between art and reality, as Stephen Jacobi argues 'her presence allows the text to examine the problems of writing,'[777] and here Wilson also uses Sukey's lack of understanding of her sister's work to highlight the disparity between the sisters' roles in life. Whilst Margaret escapes from her childhood by means of fictionalising it, Sukey escapes by idealistically dreaming of her future, 'her own future children, England, the Quantock Hills, the North Sea waves breaking against the cliffs.'[778] Sukey, who 'thinks marriage the cure for everything,'[779] hopes Margaret will 'marry and settle down. If she doesn't get too much into the arty set'[780] and although she does marry (twice), Margaret continues to put her writing first and has no children. This begs the question: does Margaret's adherence to her writer's life mean that she cannot have a happy home life, or that she neither wants nor needs one? Margaret, who is repeatedly likened to

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[775] Ibid, p.187.
[776] V. P. Sharma, 'The Novelist-Figures in Angus Wilson's Fiction,' *Panjab University Research Bulletin (Arts)*, Vol. 23. No. 2 (October, 1992), p.56.
[777] Stephen Jacobi, 'Versions of the Self in the Later Novels of Angus Wilson: A Lacanian Persepctive (PhD Thesis, Birkbeck University, 1994), p.77.
[778] *No Laughing Matter*, p.146.
[779] Ibid, p.187.
[780] Ibid.

Wilson,[781] is often seen to have taken her need to protect herself through fiction too far, to the extent that she struggles to form meaningful relationships in later life. Anne Thomas finds that Margaret's ironic viewpoint:

> Frequently prevents her participation in, and thus her understanding of, that life she attempts to convey. As she used words to shield herself from the harsher verities of growing up at Number 52, so does she continue to erect a verbal barrier between herself and the world which she seeks to render in her own, and thus more comprehensible, terms. Irony is, therefore, both protection and obstruction, both the groundwork for her account of life and the wall behind which she can take refuse from it.[782]

The prime example of this is in Margaret's first real relationship, with Clifford Arbuckle, who discovers some of her half-finished notes, pertaining to their relationship, interrupted before she had a chance to write the complementary side:

> Clifford's saving graces remained forever unrecorded, for Margaret's attention was distracted…Her book lay open as she had left it…beneath her own writing she read his…seriously I don't see how we can maintain a real relationship if I (and other human beings) are so totally unreal to you that you can love them when they're with you and write this sort of thing when they're away an hour from you.[783]

At the novel's end, with only Margaret and Marcus left, Marcus accuses her in a similar way to that in which Clifford had, years earlier, saying 'you just sit on life with your bony bottom

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[781] See, for example C. H. A. Keesom, *Angus Wilson: Mimic of the Mind and of Fiction* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University, 1983), K. W. Gransden, *Angus Wilson* (Harlow: Longmans, Green & Co, 1969) and Peter Faulkner, *Angus Wilson: Mimic and Moralist* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1980).
[782] Anne N. Thomas, 'In Search of Self: Art as Awareness in the Later Novels of Angus Wilson' (PhD Dissertation, Drew University, 1984), pp.96-97.
[783] *No Laughing Matter*, p.199.

until you've pulverized it into sand.'[784] Margaret, aware of her propensity to do so, has already remarked that within her ironically detached writing 'she mustn't spare *herself*…she *must* not spare herself.'[785] Sharma asserts that Wilson's novelist-figures can be classified into 'the successful and the failed…the failed writers are those who evade the issues, wallow in self-pity, and consequently fail to connect anywhere, in life or in art.'[786] However, it seems that Margaret, although undoubtedly successful as a novelist, struggles throughout the novel to balance her art and her life. If anything, she connects her art with her life too much, to the extent that it ends up taking over. In this she is contrasted starkly with her father who, unlike the other very much more traditionally patriarchal father-figure novelists[787] looked at in this thesis, merely poses as an author – he takes more care in dressing up like one, as Mouse says: 'smoking a pipe in public and wearing that velvet jacket of yours are more your idea of being an author,'[788] and there is little evidence of his artistic output aside from 'a series of articles published in Blackwood's magazine on Cricket in Literature,' a 'first published story in the Savoy,' and the hint at a historical novel, when a member of his club asks him 'when are you giving the world another, Matthews?'[789] During one of the 'family plays' the Countess and Mouse discuss his livelihood:

> MRS MATTHEWS junior:… *Billy* can hardly make a living out of writing.
>
> MOUSE: He's almost made one out of not writing.[790]

Throughout *No Laughing Matter* he is supposedly working on his memoirs, telling Margaret, suspicious that he does nothing all day, 'memoir writing's an oblique art,'[791] but it is clear that

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[784] Ibid, p.478.
[785] Ibid, p.467.
[786] Sharma, p.53.
[787] Henry Severell in Byatt's *The Shadow of the Sun* and James Mortmain in *I Capture The Castle*.
[788] *No Laughing Matter*, p.25.
[789] Ibid, pp.132;102;47.
[790] Ibid, p.95.
[791] Ibid, p.53.

he merely enjoys the idea of being a writer, dressing up and playing a role; we certainly see no evidence of his work, although we see extracts of Margaret's. His inactivity is a constant source of tension in the family; financial troubles are always linked to Billy Pop's pretence that he is a writer, P. N. Furbank even finds that the Countess 'despises and bullies [him]…as a literary and sexual failure.'[792] Her favourite son Rupert reflects that 'the white slug had never given her what she needed,'[793] and later, the Countess exclaims to him:

> An author. And an author who had a house and an independence. An independence! That's what he told me…it makes me laugh now to remember how I thought it would all be…Billy will never make any.[794]

The Countess's numerous lovers undermine Billy's position at the head of the family in the same way his children's artistic leanings undermine his own output: aside from Margaret's writing Marcus becomes an art collector, Rupert an actor, Quentin a journalist, Sukey writes nostalgia for the radio, and even Gladys deals antiques; Averil Gardner finds that Rupert, Marcus and Margaret in particular 'though reacting strongly against their "awful" parents, nevertheless may be felt to derive much of their talent as actor, collector of paintings, and novelist from the real if less successful authorship of their father, the histrionic appetite for experience and beauty of their mother.'[795] Wilson can be seen to (slightly) redeem Billy and the Countess' terrible parenting in that they have inversely provided inspiration of a kind that has encouraged their children to succeed against all the odds. Similarities to Wilson's own biography also lead us to question if a novelist is born, created by circumstance or necessity – Wilson uses Margaret's character in order 'to explore a number of interesting questions about

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[792] P. N. Furbank, 'No Laughing Matter: A word on Angus Wilson' in ed. Zachery Leader, *On Modern British Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.32.
[793] *No Laughing Matter*, p.42.
[794] Ibid, p.83.
[795] Averil Gardner, *Angus Wilson* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), p.99.

the psychology of literary creation.'[796] Margaret's early use of fiction – as an attempt to produce an amended version of her reality – changes her outlook on life: she begins by depending upon fiction's ability to enhance her life rather than using life to inspire her fiction, but comes to rely on that reality as raw material.

[796] Peter Faulkner, *Angus Wilson: Mimic and Moralist* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1980), p.174.

VI. 'HAVE YOU BEEN PLAYING ME ALL ALONG?'

Fate, The Novelist as Dreamer, and The Death of the Author in Jonathan Coe's *What A Carve Up!*

> It also occurred to me, in my capacity as editor, that there were certain passages in Michael's manuscript so laudably academic in tone, so rigorous in their historical perspective, that they might have proved a trifle daunting…my advice to such readers, then, would be that they can safely ignore the main body of his narrative, for my intention in the remainder of this Preface is to summarize, in a few concise, vivid pages.[797]

The death of Jonathan Coe's novelist-character, Michael Owen, at the end of *What A Carve Up!* represents the final manifestation of the novel's confused and problematic relationship between the author and his text. Throughout the novel, the narrative voice(s) have been deliberately muddled by the plethora of fragments, which in Coe's own words 'leapfrogs from one narrative mode to another, taking in pastiche of tabloid newspaper articles, juvenile diaries, TV interview transcripts and…detective writers.'[798] The published version of the book which Michael is employed to write – the only writing officially attributed to him – entitled 'The Winshaw Legacy: a Family Chronicle,'[799] is reduced to merely a title page and a two-page preface written by his editor, who removes any significance the text might have had through her instruction to the reader to ignore his work. This literal death of the author and the conse-

[797] Coe, *What A Carve Up!* p.498.
[798] Jonathan Coe, 'What a Carve Up! by Jonathan Coe: Week Three: Jonathan Coe on writing *What a Carve Up!*' *Guardian Book Club*, 16 April 2011 accessed http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/apr/16/jonathan-coe-carve-book-club 15/11/2013.
[799] *What A Carve Up!* p.495.

quences for his work reflects the symbolic death of the author and his removal from the text, but it also examines and questions the notion of a literary character's autonomy through Michael's adherence to his fate: the notion that the plot of his life has been written for him by others and his role in the novel is to follow this destiny, like Cocteau's titular character in his 1950 film *Orphée*, from which one of the novel's epigraph's is taken.[800] Alan Robinson points out that, in this, Coe plays 'with two narratological issues: first, the aesthetic illusion that literary characters have an ontological existence separate from their authorial creator; second, whether literary characters can be said to exercise free will, or are entirely subject to the author's deterministic plotting.'[801] Michael's fatalistic recurring dreams involving his fulfilment of the role in the 1961 spoof-horror film, *What A Carve Up!* which he describes himself as 'inhabiting,'[802] and also of the doomed final flight of Yuri Gagarin – 'I dreamed that I was him, plummeting down to earth in this burning plane'[803] – signify his lack of freedom, as do the schemes of Tabitha and Mortimer Winshaw involving him in the planned demise of their family. The reference to *Orphée* and the Orpheus myth also crystallises (before it systematically destroys) the concept of the artistic quest for immortality through art. After his death, Michael's book is rushed out by the vanity publishers Peacock Press, who pretend that:

> We could do no better justice to his memory than by sending his last work upon its way with all despatch. It is for this reason alone (despite the malicious hints which have been dropped in various quarters of the press) that we publish it so soon after the sensational events which have recently aroused keen public interest in the Winshaw family and all its doings.[804]

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[800] Who is told 'Si vous dormez, si vous rêvez, acceptez vos rêvez' – 'the role of the dreamer is to accept their dreams, that is the role of the dreamer.' Jean Cocteau, *Ophée* (Paris: DisCina, 1950).
[801] Alan Robinson, *Narrating the Past: Historiography, Memory and the Contemporary Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.116-7.
[802] *What A Carve Up!* p.152.
[803] Ibid, p.354.
[804] Ibid, p.497.

However, just as in the novel, Michael's memory is destined to be eclipsed by the gross caricatures of the Winshaws. His position in the novel as a novelist-character not only acts to destabilise the conceit of the character's autonomy, it also forces the reader to question the nature of reality in the novel. Michael has already had some success as a novelist prior to being hired to write the biography of the Winshaws; he is led to believe that it is as a result of her admiration for his novels that he is commissioned by Tabitha. Having no experience of writing non-fiction, it is perhaps not surprising that Michael has a propensity to fictionalise what he writes about the Winshaws:

> The more I saw of these wretched, lying, thieving, self-advancing Winshaws, the less I liked them, and the more difficult it became for me to preserve the tone of the official historian. And the less I was able to get access to solid and demonstrable facts, the more I had to bring my imagination to bear of the narrative, fleshing out incidents of which I had been able to learn only the shadowy outline, speculating on matters of psychological motivation, even inventing conversations. (Yes, inventing: I won't fight shy of the word, even if I'd fought shy of the thing itself for nearly five years by then.)[805]

Michael's publisher remarks upon the confusion in the version of the text he reads – 'you've written a book about them which seems to have started out as a history and turned into a novel. What on earth gave you that idea?'[806] The novel forces a juxtaposition of the bland character of Michael[807] who is, as described in his final moments before the plane crash, 'hollow, his body is an empty shell,'[808] and the vividly drawn members of the Winshaw family, which

[805] Ibid, p.90.
[806] Ibid, p.105.
[807] Who is intended to be two-dimensional, baring a similarity to Coe himself (in a similar way to Powell's Nick Jenkins) bequeathed elements of Coe's own life, especially the very similar titles of his novels '*Accidents Will Happen* and *The Loving Touch*' (p.284) – Coe's first two novels were *The Accidental Woman* (1987) and *A Touch of Love* (1989).
[808] Ibid, p.492.

he may or may not have created, or partially created: their successes in the worlds of business, agriculture, art, finance and the military are also compared with Michael's creative block and meagre existence in 1980s Britain. Many critics of Coe's work read this as an attack on Thatcherite Britain,[809] viewing the marginalised figure of the impoverished writer as a representative everyman for the downtrodden members of late-twentieth-century society: Michael, in an attempt to justify his years of creative dearth, says 'the 1980s weren't a good time for me, on the whole. I suppose they weren't good for a lot of people.'[810] The explanation the reader is given as to why the 1980s were such a difficult time, comes from the chapters focusing on the members of the Winshaw family – Hilary the tabloid journalist, Henry the right-wing politician, Roddy the art dealer, Dorothy the agricultural business-woman, Thomas the banker, and Mark the arms dealer – and how their individual and collective machinations have impacted upon the British public, but also their effect upon Michael in particular. As his friend lies dying in an NHS hospital, Michael realises that her lack of efficient treatment is the fault of Henry's policies:

> I've found out why you're here, you see. You're here because of Henry Winshaw…bring in the rest of the family, while we're at it. They've all got blood on their hands. It's written all over their faces. There's no end to the people who've died because of Mark and his obscene trade. Dorothy was the one who killed off my father, feeding him all that junk; and Thomas added a twist of the knife, making his money vanish into thin air just when he needed it. Roddy and Hilary have certainly done their bit. If imagination's the lifeblood of the people

[809] See especially Richard Bradford, *The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), Colin Hutchinson, *Reaganism, Thatcherism and the Social Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and Terry Eagleton, 'Theydunnit,' *London Review of Books*, Vol. 16, No. 8 (28 April 1994).
[810] *What A Carve Up!* p.102.

> and thought is our oxygen, then his job's to cut off our circulation and hers is to make sure we all stay dead from the neck up.[811]

Michael's knowledge of the family's immoral behaviour has come through his research and writing, but it only gradually becomes apparent to him that they are complicit in several of his own personal problems, which, as Dominic Head suggests, means 'the writing persona becomes the symbolic victim.'[812] Michael spends most of the novel oblivious to the fact that his life is inextricably bound up with the Winshaws, believing that it is happenstance that he is employed to write the family history:

> It was purely by chance that I found myself writing a book about the Winshaws…if it had not been for an entirely accidental meeting on a railway journey from London to Sheffield in the month of June, 1982, I would never have become their official historian.[813]

He has been tricked into believing his employment as biographer was coincidental, when in fact, as the private detective Findlay Onyx tells him:

> 'You were chosen.'
>
> 'Chosen? Who by?'
>
> 'By Tabitha Winshaw, of course….she insisted – *insisted* mind – that book could only be written by you.'[814]

The identity of Michael's biological father seals his fate to the Winshaws, as Tabitha tells Michael – 'fate had delivered you into my hands.'[815] The accident of Michael's birth and his fa-

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[811] Ibid, p.413.
[812] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.36.
[813] *What A Carve Up!* p.87.
[814] Ibid, pp.341-42.

ther's relation to the Winshaws is one of the novel's many coincidences. As John Mullan points out, these coincidences are significant within the novel as they 'mean that he has a destiny.'[816] Michael's fate leads him to his death alongside the last surviving Winshaw, Tabitha, as she deliberately crashes the plane they are in, echoing the dream which has possessed Michael throughout his life: of being Yuri Gagarin, sharing the moment of his death. But why does Michael have to die? Pamela Thurschwell maintains that he is 'killed off in a sense by the requirements of plot and symmetry…Michael simply must fulfil the dreams of his childhood.'[817] Michael's death is represented as freeing – 'I am no longer in pain…I am no longer afraid'[818] – a symbolic release from the tragedy of his life and also from the far-reaching repercussions of the Winshaw's impact on modern Britain. But ultimately he meets his end with them because, after they are gone there is not enough of himself left to continue: he has in part *created* them within his fictional biography, he is therefore partially complicit with their wrongdoings. Just before he dies, he recognises that he has become hollow and empty as 'everything that was inside him has been left way behind.'[819] Tabitha and Mortimer's plan to wipe out their family extends to Michael as a co-creator of their villainy, which is why Tabitha takes him with her on her suicide mission. Both Tabitha and Mortimer also use Michael's book to justify their vendetta against the family; Mortimer, who is ultimately responsible for the deaths of Hilary, Mark, Roddy, Dorothy, Henry, and Thomas, cites Michael's book as his inspiration – 'It was you, Mr Owen, who finally persuaded me. That book of yours. It gave me the idea.'[820] In a sense, Michael has already confessed to the part he plays in the massacre,

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[815] Ibid, p.476.
[816] John Mullan, 'What a Carve Up! by Jonathan Coe: Week Two: Coincidences,' *Guardian Book Club*, 9 April 2011 accessed http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/apr/09/jonathan-coe-carve-book-club15/11/2013
[817] Pamela Thurschwell, 'Genre, Repetition and History in Jonathan Coe,' in ed. Philip Tew and Rod Mengham, *British Fiction Today* (London: Continuum, 2006), p.36.
[818] *What A Carve Up!* p.493
[819] Ibid, p.492.
[820] Ibid, p.484

through an earlier scene which foreshadows his responsibility: whilst playing Cluedo with friends it occurs to him that he is the killer:

> The culprit, of course, was none other than myself…I wondered what it would actually feel like, to be present at the unravelling of some terrible mystery and then to be suddenly…to find, all at once, that you were thoroughly and messily bound up in the web of motives and suspicions which you had presumed to untangle with an outsider's icy detachment.[821]

The fact that this is exactly what happens to Michael precludes his innocence in much the same way that, after his death, his editor repudiates his influence over the text. Effectively this means that much of Michael's life (as well as his death) has been in vain as he is written out of his own story, dismissed by the editor's advice to the reader: 'ignore the main body of his narrative.'[822] This is Coe's concluding symbolic representation of Michael's death, and the one that resonates most within literary criticism – the removal of the author from influence over the text, although Coe's criticism seems to be levelled towards the publishing industry and its treatment of authors. In a discussion of changes to the business of publishing in *What A Carve Up!* Joseph Brooker notes that 'Coe registers some of the changes in the book business.'[823] As well as the treatment of Michael by Hortensia Tonks, editor at the vanity publishers Peacock Press, Coe also employs the figure of Patrick Mills, whose firm published Michael's earlier novels, in order to comment upon the changes in the industry:

> I hate this job, you know. I really hate what it's become…I mean, it's just not the same job anymore. The whole business has changed out of all recognition.

[821] Ibid, pp.302-03.
[822] Ibid, p.498.
[823] Joseph Brooker, *Literature of the 1980s: After the Watershed* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p.34.

> We all get our instructions from America…nobody gives a tinker's fuck about fiction any more, not *real* fiction.[824]

The discussion between Patrick and Michael about the state of Michael's literary career, specifically his involvement with the Winshaws, allows a further dig about the death of 'real fiction,' as Patrick sees it. It transpires that tabloid journalist Hilary has written a novel; when Michael asks about it, Patrick tells him:

> Oh, it's the usual sort of rubbish. Lots of media people being dynamic and ruthless. Sex every forty pages. Cheap tricks, mechanical plot, lousy dialogue, could have been written by a computer. Probably was written by a computer. Empty, hollow, materialistic, meretricious. Enough to make any civilized person heave, really…I just know it's going to be the hit of the spring season.[825]

Although dismissive of Hilary's writing, the tastes of the publishing world (or at least the readers' proclivities), and his exasperation over the confused narrative of Michael's Winshaw book, Patrick concludes:

> 'That leaves us with a book which is scurrilous, scandal-seeking, vindictive in tone, obviously written out of feelings of malice and even, in parts…a little shallow.'
>
> I breathed a sigh of relief. 'So you'll publish it?'[826]

A final commentary on the nature of the publishing industry comes from both Findlay and Fiona's beliefs that they know Michael from his books. Whilst Fiona has gleaned information about his personal life, asking:

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[824] *What A Carve Up!* p.102.
[825] Ibid, p.103.
[826] Ibid, p.106.

> ‘All right then: when did you get divorced?’
>
> I put my wineglass down in mid-sip, spilling some on the table.
>
> ‘How did you know about that?’
>
> ‘It was on the cover of that book you showed me.’[827]

The louche detective Findlay tells Michael:

> I must admit to feeling, having read your two excellent novels, that we are already the oldest and dearest of friends.[828]

This feeling of being known through his novels (even if the feeling is misguided) allows Michael some distance from the accusations of Thomas Winshaw, who connects Michael with the killer in the film *Ten Little Indians*[829] – ‘He called himself Owen. Mr U. N. Owen’[830] – a play on ‘unknown.’ Throughout the novel Michael’s life story has been slowly unravelled and he has become known to the reader, including the surprise revelation about his paternity, the coincidence which irrevocably ties him to the story of the Winshaws. However, just as he is able to reach out through his writing to characters like Findlay and Fiona, Michael is also able to change aspects of his plotted life; although he cannot change his ultimate fate – to fulfil his dreams of Yuri Gagarin – he is able to achieve some mastery over the plot of the film *What A Carve Up!* for, whilst the Kenneth Connor character, whom Michael ‘plays,’ flees from Shirley Eaton, Michael is able to overcome his fear of sex and go to bed with her stand-in, Phoebe. Thus he takes back a little of his own autonomy within the novel, finding himself inhabiting different roles, and speaking other characters’ lines – ‘that line should have been

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[827] Ibid, p.147.
[828] Ibid, p.168.
[829] Thomas refers to the plot of the film being ‘from Agatha Christie’s *Ten Little Niggers*. There are three different film versions’ (p.452.) – but the version he refers to, including Shirley Eaton in the cast, is the 1965 *Ten Little Indians*.
[830] Ibid, p.453.

Sid's.'[831] As Michael is able, albeit only slightly, to divert from his destined path, so the novel *What A Carve Up!* is presented to the reader with the editor's 'Preface' at the end of the novel, rather than at the beginning, as is usual: the advice to ignore the narrative comes too late, by the end of the novel the plot has already, of course been read. The author has therefore not died completely in vain, after all.

[831] Ibid, p.403.

VII. 'WE LIE FOR A LIVING'

Faith vs. Fiction, Authority vs. Authorship in Anthony Burgess's *Earthly Powers* and Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*

> I had, of course, no real need to puzzle all this business out; I was under no obligation at all…But there was this niggling matter of truth. The term *truth* did not flood my eyes as did *faith* and *duty* and sometimes *home*, but a man who serves language, however imperfectly, should always serve truth… I was less concerned now with that deeper truth, the traditional attribute of God, which literature can best serve by telling lies, than with the shallower truth we call factuality.[832]

> I'm like God the Father, you see, and you are my sacrificial Son, and a reader is a Holy Ghost who keeps everything joined together and moving along. It doesn't matter how much you detest this book I am writing, you can't escape it before I let you go. But if the readers detest it they can shut it and forget it; you'll simply vanish and I'll turn into an ordinary man. We mustn't let that happen.[833]

This section of the final chapter picks up some of themes addressed throughout the thesis, such as the God-like authority of the novelist over their novel, the relationship between truth, reality, and fiction, and the notion of a character's predestination or free will. Both Burgess

[832] Anthony Burgess, *Earthly Powers* (London: Penguin, 1981), p.45.
[833] Alasdair Gray, *Lanark* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2007), p.495.

and Gray's novels deal explicitly with the idea of a God: whilst Burgess's erstwhile Catholic novelist-narrator Kenneth Toomey is juxtaposed with a brother-in-law who goes on to become Pope, Gray's Lanark undertakes a journey to find answers which all but culminates with a frustrating encounter with his author, Nastler. This section will focus upon Burgess's novel, as Lanark's meeting with Nastler is only one chapter in a novel which has multiple additional themes; *Earthly Powers*, on the other hand, is entirely preoccupied with the relationship between faith and fiction. Kenneth Toomey, although now a retired novelist, narrates the story of his life in relation to his lost faith; it is also the story of how his brother-in-law, Carlo Campanati, becomes Pope and later a candidate for sainthood. Burgess was himself a lapsed Catholic, however in Toomey he creates a character who is forced to renounce his faith because, as a homosexual, he is unable to reconcile his belief in a God who created him as he is only to condemn his natural instincts. Instead Toomey comes to a version of dualistic belief – 'since God had made me homosexual, I had to believe that there was another God forbidding me to be so.'[834] Burgess openly based Toomey upon Somerset Maugham, explaining in an interview:

> It struck me as being a most bizarre kind of narrator, someone who's a rationalist. To imagine Somerset Maugham as being related by marriage to the Pope. Of course, it could happen, you see…before you know it, you find you've got a Pope in the family. You as a homosexual, who's rejected the religion…and are called upon to make a definitive declaration concerning a miracle, which is valuable, you know, because if any credulous peasant offered it, it wouldn't be

[834] *Earthly Powers*, p.60.

> very believable, but if a rationalist and an ex-Catholic made it, it gives it a certain rigor.[835]

The significance of Toomey's sexuality is in his necessarily conflicted attitude towards God, placing him in opposition to the novel's other central character, Carlo. Geoffrey Aggeler finds that whilst Toomey and Carlo share a certain belief, in what Aggeler terms, 'monsters…within the labyrinth of the human soul,'[836] although they disagree upon the origin of these monsters – Toomey believing they are a part of human nature and Carlo who 'always stoutly held to the view that man was created good and that evil is from the devil.'[837] Aggeler goes on to suggest that Carlo 'develops into a very sinister figure indeed, one who seems to have acquired his earthly powers by means of a Faustian bargain.'[838] A. I. Farkas questions the legitimacy of what may be perceived as a meeting between Carlos and the devil, due to its being witnessed solely by Toomey, a self-professed unreliable narrator: early in the narrative he sets himself up as such, stating 'writers of fiction often have difficulty in deciding between what really happened and what they imagine have happened.'[839] Toomey's unreliability is compounded by the world of the novel, which, as Francis Sparshott finds, 'systematically frustrates our world-reconstituting powers. The world projected by the novel has neither the history of our world nor a different history of its own, but our own history falsified… impossible to establish any clear relationship between the book's world and ours.'[840] This theme is carried through to the final pages of the novel, in which he plans to call his memoirs '*Confabulations*…it means the replacement of the gaps left by a disordered memory with imaginary

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[835] Samuel Coale, 'An Interview with Anthony Burgess,' *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Autumn, 1981), pp.449-50.
[836] Geoffrey Aggeler, 'Faust in the Labyrinth: Earthly Powers,' *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Autumn, 1981), p.524.
[837] *Earthly Powers*, p.426.
[838] Aggeler, p.526.
[839] *Earthly Powers*, p.17.
[840] Francis Sparshott, 'The Case of the Unreliable Author,' *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (October, 1986), pp.155-56.

remembered experiences believed to be true. Not that I see the difference.'[841] Toomey's inability, or indeed unwillingness, to separate what is real and what he has imagined may be seen to discredit his re-counting of the incident when Carlos sees the devil:

> He seemed to see the devil in the corner of the livingroom…The devil assumed the guise of a large rat, whose sleek fur and bright teeth Carlo admired extravagantly in various languages, including, I think Aramaic.[842]

We must assume that even if Carlo sees the devil, Toomey cannot, yet there is no mention of Carlo telling Toomey that he perceives the rat, so we must either assume that Toomey merely infers this from what Carlo says or he is fictionalising the incident. Farkas comments that the scene has all 'the clarity of a nightmare;'[843] occurring shortly after Carlo has discovered that he is adopted and that his biological parents are unknown, he is drunk and his faith is totally shaken. The question of whether or not Carlo has made a pact with the devil in order to attain the papacy is integral to the narrative, not only because it raises the question of Toomey's (un)reliability but also because it interrogates the nature of both Carlo and Toomey's earthly powers: the miracle healings and exorcisms Carlo performs contrasted with Toomey's narrative powers.[844] Referencing *At Swim-Two-Birds*, some of Toomey's characters debate the novelist's powers:

> The whole thing's a fake. We're fakes too. We're saying what he wants us to say. You see that Degas over there – he could turn it into a Monet at a stroke of

[841] *Earthly Powers*, p.645.
[842] *Earthly Powers*, p.358.
[843] I. A. Farkas, *Will's Son and Jake's Peer: Anthony Burgess's Joycean Negotiations* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2002), p.123.
[844] Furthermore it undermines Carlo's work as a 'good' man: his lust for power is paid for by making a lie of his faith and relegates the authority of God by choosing the side of the devil instead. Both Carlo and Toomey are presented as fallen, Carlo for the lure of power on earth and Toomey because of his sexuality: both are flawed, and, in asking the reader to see the sin in each, Burgess only really succeeds in blaming God for being too judgemental.

> the pen. He could reduce the number of oranges in that bowl from eight to three. He could make me die now of a heart attack.
>
> I nearly wrote: *She died at once of cardiac arrest*.
>
> This would not do at all. I got up and walked round my study. For the first time I was being made to realize how tenuous my art, such as it was, was.[845]

Of course, as a novelist he has control over his characters – he can do any of the things his character claims; however, Toomey begins to doubt the validity of such powers, finding instead that he is bound to the narrative and indeed to the force of his characters, his powers only nominal, and that, ultimately both he and his characters have 'only the illusion of freedom. Like all of us.'[846] His equation of himself with his characters indicates that he feels a lack of free will. This exemplified by an occasion (during the war) when Toomey is commissioned by the government to 'write the book on the camps.' Although he recognises that 'it was probably the duty of a writer' to do so, he takes exception to the job – feeling that he 'can't…be ordered to write a book.'[847] However Burgess himself is explicit on the necessity of free will: Michael Wheeler finds that 'Burgess's main interest is always in free will,'[848] and Burgess himself arguing 'I don't think there'd be any point in writing a novel about a man who loses free will…you can't make a novel out of a character without free will…there's no point in writing fiction if you can't present a free character.'[849] As *Earthly Powers* is a memoir, Toomey occasionally lets his knowledge of future events cloud his narrative, mistaking his knowledge of what will happen as a lack of free will for the characters involved. For example, in talking about his twin niece and nephew, he writes:

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[845] *Earthly Powers*, p.521.
[846] Ibid.
[847] Ibid, p.454.
[848] Michael Wheeler, 'The Limits of Hell: Lodge, Murdoch, Burgess, Golding,' *Journal of Literature and Theology*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March, 1990), p.79.
[849] Coale, p.447.

> Those poor children, I think, looking back, one of them to suffer directly and terribly, the other vicariously; but I must not anticipate. I must be like God, giving them the illusion of free will, allowing their future…to be as velvety blank as the fine bond which the author, all too soon, will commence to defile with his pen.[850]

He seems to forget that what he is depicting is (mostly) reality; however he lets the author in him foreshadow future events, using this to justify a likeness to God whom he sees as having predetermined events, to the extent that free will is only an illusion. Toomey's ideas about free will are tied to his feelings about his sexuality – he believes he was created a homosexual, that he did not choose to be one, and therefore it is not something Toomey can stop within himself: 'God has made him like this. Therefore, he must resent God.'[851] Arguably his career as a novelist is just as bound up with his opposition to religion – 'in my sad trade, we can never be really devout or pious. We lie for a living'[852] – however, more than this, it also goes so far as to associate him with the devil, whom Carlos calls 'the father of lies.'[853] In this way, as Leonard Ashley observes, Burgess brings together and contrasts 'the truths of religion and the lies of fiction,'[854] within a novel whose narrator is cut off mid-sentence (by Carlo's adoptive mother) when he tries to tell us that 'novels can be more real than –.'[855] Throughout the novel Toomey believes that his status as a novelist, as well as his sexuality, can account for the way in which he sees himself, as something other than human; we see that he recognises instances when 'I was thinking like an author, not like a human,'[856] and both stand against his ideals of religion – his 'trade,' as he repeatedly refers to his writing, sets him apart from the world and

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[850] *Earthly Powers*, p.203-04.
[851] Coale, p.451.
[852] *Earthly Powers*, p.17.
[853] Ibid, p.365.
[854] Leonard R. N. Ashley, '"Unhappy All the Time": Religion in Anthony Burgess's *Earthly Powers*,' *Christianity and Literature*, Vol. 52. No. 1 (Autumn, 2002), p.36.
[855] *Earthly Powers*, p.377.
[856] Ibid, p.9.

from God: he sees his writing, his lies, just as antithetical to any religious views as he feels his homosexuality is. His attitude towards his own sexuality renders him incapable of forming lasting relationships; instead he uses his work as a substitute for intimacy – 'creating lovers on paper…no commitments, no talking of love except on paper. Lonely as hell, except for my art.'[857]

Toomey's unhappiness is perceived as endemic to novelists, so much so that Lanark, the titular character of Gray's novel, is able to remark upon a certain type of story, 'about clever unhappy people, often authors themselves, who thought a lot but didn't do very much.'[858] Although not himself a writer – in fact he is the sole protagonist discussed in this thesis who is not – his past forgotten self, Duncan Thaw, was a painter and Lanark expresses some desire to 'write to express myself. I suppose I could do it in a story about who I am and why I have decided to write a story,'[859] unconsciously tapping in to an autobiographical impulse. Lanark also goes on to write, in a sense, by rewriting his own fate in such a way that his creator 'Nastler is forced to modify his plans.'[860] The 'Epilogue' chapter in which Lanark meets Nastler is one of the most discussed aspects of the novel; Lanark significantly finds that the many paintings set upon easels in Nastler's room, 'seemed brighter and cleaner than reality,'[861] indicating the clarifying nature of art upon reality. In comparison Nastler himself is depicted as squalid, wearing 'a woollen jersey over a pyjama jacket, neither of them clean.'[862] Nastler, a name which most critics, including Brian McHale, view as a 'transparent distortion of "Alasdair,"'[863] is presented to Lanark as the King of Provon, 'he knows everything about everything,'[864] although he soon tells Lanark, 'I am your author' before going on to answer

[857] Ibid, p.193.
[858] *Lanark*, p.15.
[859] Ibid.
[860] Neil Rhind, ''Life's Easy When You're A Robot': Exploring Reification Through the Dual Narratives of Lanark,' *Scottish Literary Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2011), p.105.
[861] *Lanark*, p.480.
[862] Ibid.
[863] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987), p.214.
[864] *Lanark*, p.478.

Lanark's question '"Are you pretending to be God?"' with '"Not nowadays. I used to be part of him, though."'[865] Nastler's authority, however, is undermined not only by his lack of omniscience – 'you know details of the story which I don't,'[866] his demeanour, as Lanark observes it 'a slippery person but too vain and garrulous to be impressive,'[867] but ultimately his incorrect predictions about the fall of Unthank and Lanark's own death. He tells Lanark that:

> Suddenly there is an earth-quake. Suddenly the sea floods the city…your eyes finally close upon the sight of John Knox's statue.[868]

However, Nastler's inability to foresee the birth of Lanark's son, Alexander, his refusal to even admit that his birth is a possibility – 'impossible…there's no time for Rima to have a baby…I can't change my overall plan'[869] – undermines his plan for the city and for Lanark. Therefore Alexander is able to intervene, leading his father away from the necropolis and John Knox's statue, and the flood's magnitude is much less than Nastler had planned, 'the broken buildings were fewer than he had thought…with only mild disappointment he saw the flood ebbing back down the slope of the road.'[870] Nastler's obsession with the ruin of his creation 'is overthrown by the freedom which Lanark has attained, the humanity he has acquired and been able to pass on…Lanark defies his creator with the creation of a son,'[871] writes Cairns Craig. Lanark succeeds in authoring his own ending, refusing to submit to Nastler's designs for him. In this, Gray redefines the position of the author-God by removing his authority, placing the responsibility of the story with the protagonist, who becomes a distortion of the artist-hero. This removal of authority is reflected in the autocritical 'INDEX OF PLAGIA-

[865] Ibid, p.481.
[866] Ibid, p.483.
[867] Ibid, p.484.
[868] Ibid, p.497.
[869] Ibid, p.498.
[870] Ibid, p.558.
[871] Cairns Craig, 'Going Down to Hell is Easy: Lanark, Realism and the Limits of the Imagination,' in ed. Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn, *The Arts of Alasdair Gray* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p.105.

RISMS'[872] which accompanies the conversation between Nastler and Lanark, exposing the source of Nastler's ideas about novel-writing and authorship, whilst simultaneously undermining the entire literary canon by parodying its worth and meaning, with its limiting intertextual significance to the bearing it has upon *Lanark.* So, for example, the entire works of Shakespeare are reduced to one note:

> SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM. Books 1 and 2 owe much to the play Hamlet in which heavy paternalism forces a weak-minded youth into dread of existence, hallucinations and crime.[873]

The plagiarisms listed demonstrate the inherent intertextuality of the novel form, forcing it to turn in upon itself in much the same manner as Nastler describes his process of creation:

> I am part of a part which was once the whole. But I went bad and was excreted. If I can get well I may be allowed home before I die, so I continually plunge my beak into my rotten liver and swallow and excrete it. But it grows again. Creation festers in me. I am excreting you and your world at the present.[874]

Nastler's depiction of his method of creation, is, finds Cristie March, rooted in mythology: 'by identifying himself additionally with both Prometheus, the Greek creator of mankind, and the eagle that pecks at his liver, a figure of both consumption and excretion, Nastler places himself firmly at the center of the cycle.'[875] Nastler turns the idea of authorship in on itself, making the author both consumer and consumed; the grotesque images of body parts, festering, and excretion echo Beckett's *Unnameable,* as does the cyclical nature of the metaphor, which enforces John Barth's account of postmodernism as 'the literature of exhaustion.' *Lanark*'s

[872] *Lanark,* pp.485-499.
[873] Ibid, p.496.
[874] Ibid, p.481.
[875] Cristie March, 'Bella and the Beast (and a few dragons, too): Alasdair Gray and the Social Resistance of the Grotesque,' *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction,* Vol. 43, No. 4 (Summer 2002), p.337.

emphatically postmodern ‘Epilogue’ chapter enforces the notion that the author should no longer be seen a God of creation but as ‘a damned conjuror,’[876] with only limited powers: his authority stands only in relation to that which his characters, and also his readers, allow him.

[876] *Lanark*, p.484.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This final chapter has looked at some of the metaphorical roles which the novelist-character can be seen as performing. These include roles which either parallel or augment the position of the novelist – such as the detective, everyman, observer, and dreamer – as well as exploring the function of the novelist within the family, and discussing the relationship between the novelist and God, or the god-like role a novelist may be seen as inhabiting. The various roles performed by the novelist-character reflect upon the multiplicity of the novelist figure and the number of different ways this figure can be seen to function within society, and within the novel. Many of the major themes which have pervaded the thesis continue to run through this chapter, two of which I would particularly like the pick out. Firstly the relationship between the novelist-character and their raw material (life) which is especially evident in *The End of the Affair*, where Bendrix assumes the role of detective in puzzling out the truth of what happened to Sarah; in *Any Human Heart* and *I Capture The Castle* which both take the form of writer's journals or notebooks in which every day occurrences are observed and recorded; and in *No Laughing Matter* in which the central novelist-character reworks her family life into fiction in order to revenge herself upon her self-involved parents, but, in doing so neglects to ever truly live her life.

The second key theme is the notion of the novelist as an outsider, separated from the world around them. Even Cassandra Mortmain, writing from the kitchen sink at the very heart of her family, at times feels totally apart from them, as does Logan Mountstuart who spends much of his life alone with nothing to turn to or live for except the journal he keeps. Michael Owen

becomes a recluse and Kenneth Toomey removes himself from the Catholic Church because of his homosexuality which, together with his position as a novelist, makes him perceive a discord between his vocation and his humanity: he states that he thinks and feels 'like an author, not like a human.'[877] Nastler, although he is styled the king of Provan, remains largely estranged from the outside world: the room which he inhabits, which we are told bear 'no architectural similarity to the building,'[878] implying that both the room and he exist on a different plane of reality. These two strands obviously contradict each other in that we see the novelist-character remains an outsider and yet dependent upon the world for inspiration. However, together they reinforce the argument that the novelist (as either character or figure) cannot easily be defined as the role has come to mean many different, often contradictory, things.

Another dominant theme of this chapter, and previous chapters, has been the interrogation of the novelist-character's authorial power within and over the narrative, which in turn questions the power any novelist may be seen to have over their narrative. *The End of the Affair, Earthly Powers*, and *Lanark* all directly relate the novelist-character to God, or some form of God. *I Capture The Castle* and *Any Human Heart* more subtly convey the powerlessness of any being, novelist or otherwise, over the events which shape their lives, by depicting characters who are committed to recording what happens to them, without being able to influence events. *What A Carve Up!* juxtaposes authorial agency and powerlessness: although through writing about the Winshaws Michael is able to galvanise Mortimer and Tabitha to destroy the family, he is unable to significantly alter his ultimate fate. He does however manage to cheat his death as an author; although his editor attempts to erase him from the narrative, by inviting the reader to 'ignore the main body of his narrative,'[879] her 'preface' doesn't appears at the end of the novel. The relative authority of the novelist-character questions the power any novelist truly has over their story – are they totally in control of every detail or is much dic-

[877] *Earthly Powers*, p.9.
[878] *Lanark*, p.480.
[879] *What A Carve Up!* p.498.

tated by inspiration and the way characters begin to take on shape and agency of their own during the writing process?

CONCLUSION

> In his early years of success diffidence had lent him charm. Prolonged prosperity had wrought the change. He had seen sensitive men make themselves a protective disguise against the rebuffs and injustices of manhood. Mr Pinfold had suffered little in these ways; he had been tenderly reared and, as a writer, welcomed and over-rewarded early.[880]

Waugh's Pinfold suffers as a direct result of his success, as do the other most quantifiably successful novelists – Philip Quarles, Maurice Bendrix, Margaret Matthews, and Kenneth Toomey. Whilst Pinfold's career as a novelist compels him towards a disgust of the outside world, Quarles fails to save either his marriage or the life of his young son; Bendrix loses Sarah to God; Margaret remains unable to ever truly live, and Toomey is unable accept himself because of his sexuality, or to find true, lasting love. These novelist-characters, those who enjoy the most prosperous writing careers, have also been found to be the characters who suffer the largest personal losses. The value of artistic success in fact seems to mean relatively little in terms of the impression we get of each writing character. Their success in terms of literary output tends to detract from their personal happiness, enacting the opposition between success in art and happiness in life. This binary is reflected in every novel analysed within this thesis, emerging as a (if not *the*) central theme in novels which feature a novelist-character. Rather than quantifiable success it is the *potential* of the character which seems to

[880] *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, p.10.

determine how they are viewed: it can be no coincidence that those characters such as Darley, Jake, and Cassandra, those most full of potential – as demonstrated by their circular, self-begetting narratives – are the ones whose writing careers are only just beginning, usually with the story we have just finished reading.

The question of what success actually means to the novelist-character him/herself, remains problematic: the character becomes representative of uncertainty about the value of success, and about the position of the novelist in general. Whereas the Bildungsroman tradition saw union between the individual and society as the ideal, and the Künstlerroman valued artistic fulfilment, the twentieth-century novelist-character seems to be uncertain of what exactly it is they strive for in terms of resolution. Whilst endemic within the twentieth-century novel, this uncertainty which underpins the desires of the novelist-characters is reflected in the uniformly pessimistic portrayal of the character type. This negative portrayal of the novelist-character appears inherent, even from the earliest instances of the character in the Victorian age[881] and developing through the twentieth-century, as authors repeatedly present a character who highlights the cynicism with which novelists have come to regard their own roles, and also the function of the novel. Although the beginning of this tendency in British fiction is evident even before the pre-WWII novels of Huxley, Maugham, and O'Brien, by the 1950s-60s it can be seen to apply to every novelist-character. This postwar era in Britain, when over half of the novels examined in this study were written, is characterised, as Dominic Head suggests, by 'uncertainty about the solidity of the social world, and about the role of the novelist in commenting upon it,'[882] as well as witnessing the beginnings of a reaction against the order the novel had previously been seen to impose upon history.

The postwar legacy of uncertainty surrounding, amongst other things, the position of the novelist and of the novel, continues to resonate within the British novel decades later, even to

[881] Around the time when authorship first came to be defined as a profession.
[882] Head, p.17.

the present. Understandably, the representation of a modest and fallible novelist-character is a comment upon the limited powers of the actual novelist, no longer seen as a hero, saviour, or prophetic voice of the people. The twentieth-century destabilisation of the novelist figure is evident in the number of novels who take up the novelist-character – although the character is so prominent it continues to appear, implying that no resolution in role and depiction has been reached. Chapter Two's discussion of novelist-characters' physical appearances found that little had changed in terms of such representations between the mid-1950s and the present day, indicating that their position has remained indeterminate for over fifty years. The negative or ambiguous portrayals of novelist-characters reflect the change in the perception of artists and writers – from special to ordinary beings – and their 'fuzziness about the place their work occupies in the grand scheme of things,'[883] demonstrates that in fact 'the writer has no more access to truth than the historian or ideologue.'[884] Novels which feature the novelist-protagonist further compound the truth-fiction dichotomy because, not content with questioning fiction's truth-telling ability, they also expose the myth of the artist or novelist's claims upon such higher truths, something the Romantics believed separated the artist, elevating him/her above ordinary man. The Victorians, whilst not holding to these romanticised views, nonetheless maintained – within the notion of the artist as craftsman, or the novelist as story-teller – a revered attitude towards this figure. In the twentieth-century, the novelist has increasingly come to be seen as an ordinary being.

This reduction in the power of the novelist figure correlates more generally to the character of the anti-hero, the implication being that twentieth-century has no place for conventional heroism. In many ways the novelist-character has been used to represent a very archetypal form of the anti-hero, embodying and underlining many of the significant aspects of that

[883] Lemon, p.xiii.
[884] Andrew Hammond, *British Fiction and the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.148.

character-type including: isolation or alienation; a sense of lost or undefinable purpose or goal; powerlessness or weakness. Simmons has noted that the anti-hero is determined by world events, finding that in 1960s American counterculture, within the conflict between 'the ideal and the real…the desire for a hero remains, but one that is devoid of its typical grandiloquent trappings.'[885] Simmons also believes that the breakdown of the prescribed hero-worship/cult of personality which surrounded figures such as Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini who appropriated the heroic model, 'inevitably led to a vehement moral questioning of the notion of the heroic ideal.'[886] The novelist-character may be seen as a default anti-hero, standing in for any alienated, disenfranchised, directionless, or powerless character, something which has made it more and more ubiquitous and also more relevant in contemporary fiction. Coe's Michael Owen, for example, lambasts himself for his inability to act:

> I brooded on this humiliating incident and cursed the ill-luck – if that is what it was – which had stamped me for ever as a man of imagination rather than action: condemned, like Orpheus, to roam an underworld of fantasies, when my hero Yuri would not have hesitated to plunge boldly towards the stars. A few well-chosen words, that was all it need have taken, and yet I couldn't even think of them: me, a published writer, for God's sake.[887]

He contrasts himself to his idol, Yuri Gagarin, a figure he sees as a true hero, associating himself with Orpheus, who despite the use of his prodigious musical talent, ultimately fails to save his wife from hell. This metaphor for the limits of art is not just applicable to Michael, but to the figure of the novelist in the twentieth-century and beyond. What Michael does not know is that his fate is sealed to that of Gagarin: two days before Gagarin's final flight, the

[885] Simmons, pp.4-6.
[886] Ibid, p.11.
[887] *What A Carve Up!* p.263.

young Michael has a prophetic dream in which he himself is involved in the crash, which in fact anticipates his own death at the hands of Tabitha Winshaw.

The self-fulfilling circularity of Michael's dreams represents another recurrent aspect of the twentieth-century novelist-character, a trope which is evident in many of the novels looked at in this study, especially the self-begetting narratives of *Pinfold*, *The Comforters*, *Under the Net*, *The Alexandria Quartet*, *The Golden Notebook*, and *I Capture The Castle*, but also in Gray's motif of Nastler, as he is seen to 'plunge my beak into my rotten liver and swallow and excrete it. But it grows again. Creation festers in me.'[888] The circularity suggested by these novels – like the Ouroborus, a serpent who devours its own tale – is a symbol of the self-reflexivity of storytelling. In a similar way, the motif of fathers and sons (or daughters in the cases of Anna Severell, Cassandra and Margaret), evidences a continual self-forging of a writing self, as Finn MacCool asserts:

> I am my own father and my son.
>
> I am every hero from the crack of time.[889]

Christopher also writes of his different incarnations: 'in a sense he is my father, and in another sense my son,'[890] addressing the self-begotten and self-reflexive nature of the novelist-character, and the novels in which he/she appears. The notion of fiction as self-begetting contrasts with what may be seen as usual methods of creation or reproduction. This is drolly reflected in Nicola Six's discussion of onanism with Keith Talent, in which she references Auden's 'The Novelist,' in calling upon the novelist, claiming that 'this is the responsibility of the novelist, who works with the quotidian, who must become the whole of boredom, among the just be just, among the filthy filthy too, Keith.'[891]

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[888] *Lanark*, p.481.
[889] *At Swim-Two-Birds*, p.19.
[890] *Down There On A Visit*, p.6.
[891] *London Fields*, p.293.

This demonstrates a turning-in of the writing self, again highlighting the uncertainty surrounding the role of the novelist: forced to turn, like Woolf's 'leaning tower writers,' towards themselves. In many ways this metafictional tendency is an antidote to a period which has also been seen to herald the death of the novel. Bergonzi, writing in 1970, identified this as the dilemma of the contemporary novelist, saying that 'he has inherited a form whose principle characteristic is novelty, or stylistic dynamism, and yet nearly everything possible to be achieved has already been done.'[892] A repost to both this perceived death of the novel, and also to a more pertinent complaint against realist fiction's inability to convey the modern world, may be seen in metafiction, drawing attention to the mechanisms of the novel, including the use of a novelist as protagonist. Nick Bentley, in a discussion of Spark's *The Comforters*, finds that this novel, like many 1950s texts, enacts a 'dialogue concerning the conventions of realism; a dialogue grounded in 1950s debates on the philosophical parameters and ideological associations of realist and modernist, or 'experimental' writing.'[893] The novelist-character as metafictional device continued to be used right through the second half of the twentieth-century, although the most compelling examples come from the 1950s-60s. Depictions of the character in 1980s-90s novels by Amis, Coe, Burgess and Gray – written during another period of agitation for the novelist-figure when new media began to change the perception and reception of the novel and novelist – are amongst the bleakest depictions of the novelist-character, especially in Amis's Sam, and in Nastler, the thoroughly depleted 'author-god' encountered by Gray's Lanark. However, one of the most cynical portrayals of a novelist-character, Quarles in Huxley's 1928 novel, is also the one earliest which demonstrates the inherently pejorative treatment of the novelist-character.

Going into the twenty-first century the novelist-character continues to appear. This thesis looks closely at only one twenty-first century novel – Boyd's *Any Human Heart*, in which the

[892] Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel*, p.19.
[893] Nick Bentley, *Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the 1950s* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), p.163.

character of Logan was conceived in an earlier work – however works such as McEwan's *Sweet Tooth* and Jacobson's *Zoo Time* (both 2012) demonstrate that the character continues to be employed. Indeed an increasingly large number of novels featuring novelist-characters have been written in the last fourteen years both in British and international fiction – for example Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*, Carol Shields's *Unless* and Joseph Heller's *Portrait of an Artist as an Old Man* (all 2000), *Shadow of the Wind* (2001) by Carlos Ruiz Zafón, Glen Duncan's *I, Lucifer* (2003), J. M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello, Slow Man, Diary of a Bad Year* (2003;2005;2007), *The Body of Jonah Boyd* by David Leavitt and Zigzag Way by Anita Desai (both 2004), Maggie Gee's *My Cleaner* and *My Driver* (2005;2009), Nicole Krausse's *History of Love* and *Great House* (2005;2010), *One Morning Like a Bird* by Andrew Miller (2008), *Lacuna* (2009) by Barbara Kingsolver, Elena Ferrante's 'Neopolitan Trilogy' beginning with *L'amica genial* (2011), *La Vérité sur l'affaire Harry Québert* (2013) by Joel Dicker, and Paul Ewen's *Francis Plug: How to be a Public Author* (2014). The sheer number of novels featuring novelist-characters written over the past fourteen years demonstrates that the character is far from redundant.

Further study of the novelist-character in the twenty-first century, would certainly provide additional insight into the character; as could a comparison of how the novelist-character has evolved internationally, especially amongst cultures with a strong tradition of novelist-characters, such as North and Latin America, as well as Europe. Undoubtedly the twentieth-century has seen a greater proliferation of novelist-characters than any other period in the novel's history; it has also seen instances of novelist-protagonists outstrip other artistic characters. Although, as the opening chapter stated, the majority of novelists who have written about the novelist-character do not explicitly engage with either modernism or postmodernism, they have reacted to an evolution of metafictional techniques which was harnessed by experimental postmodern writers. The novelist-character reinforces the metafictional and in-

trospective nature of the novel, a genre which is definitively self-reflexive – this is arguably why the novelist-character became ubiquitous in twentieth-century fiction, and will, no doubt, persistently appear in the twenty-first: as long as there are novels, novelists will continue to follow Huxley's advice and 'put a novelist into the novel.'[894] Towards the end of the *Quartet*, Durrell asks 'Can writers talk nothing but shop then?'[895] The answer (supplied by Purseward-en) is a resounding 'No.' So, more than fifty years after Durrell wrote *The Quartet*, this pre-occupation with the novel itself, concurrent with the figure of the novelist, still endures and has remained one of the most significant aspects of literary fiction.

[894] *Point Counter Point*, p.385.
[895] *The Alexandria Quartet*, p.749.

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